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INTERNATIONAL

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Socio-political Weekly

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Aleksandr Kulevsky

A student of Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, Yana Pikula, at Minsk Hothouse-Hotbed Vegetables Growing Integrated Plant

## The first herald of spring

It won't be long before the scattering of tulips will decorate our streets, pleasing the eye after the grey winter days, and the ladies will be given fresh and fragrant bouquets on March 8th. On the eve of International Women's Day, flowers in Belarusian greenhouses are gaining in beauty and waiting for their finest hour. → 6



# We can stand up for ourselves

The national security sector's readiness for new challenges and threats, improvement of the Security Council's activities and personnel issues were high on the agenda of the President's meeting with the State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus

By Yevgeny Kononovich,  
Polina Konoga

The situation globally and at our borders places special demands on the national security system. The temptation of some states and politicians to resolve all the issues by force, threats and sanctions is becoming increasingly dangerous. How ready are we for a new reality? What more needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of the national security system? These are not routine questions. The State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus, Aleksandr Volfovich, reported to the President, while the latter voiced a fundamental task,

*"In line with our conditions, we need to seriously build up and, in some places, even restructure the work of the Security Council."*

## Working in a new way

Aleksandr Volfovich was appointed State Secretary of the Security Council a month ago. Previously, he headed the General Staff of the Armed Forces and, as an experienced strategist, he's managed to not only thoroughly scrutinise the situation but also to prepare some proposals for improving the Security Council's work.

Aleksandr Lukashenko recommends relying on the experience of similar structures in the countries close to us: i.e., Russia and Kazakhstan. At the same time, he highlights the multilateral nature of the 'security' concept, ranging from economic and food security to military threats,

**"Therefore, the range of issues to be resolved is vast. The Security Council should convene regularly, it should focus on fundamental issues of security and the defence of our state. This is a top-level team of staff, who represent the President in defence and security."**

In the near future, some documents related to the functioning of the Security Council should be refined and, with this in mind, Mr. Volfovich made some suggestions. According to him, the experience of Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan regarding the composition and functions of the Security Council has been studied. Their main tasks and functions are actually similar: the protection of national interests. However, the structures differ as Russia's Security Council includes the Mayor of Moscow and the Governor of St. Petersburg, as well as the President's plenipotentiaries in the regions. Mr. Volfovich believes our country has no need for this kind of organisation at the moment.

The structure of Belarus' Security Council involves the President, who is also its Chairman, and five permanent members: the Prime Minister, chairpersons of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic, the Head of the President Administration and the State Secretary of the Security Council. In addition, there are nine members for the following positions: the Defence Minister, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces,



Aleksandr Volfovich

the First Deputy Defence Minister, the Interior Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Finance Minister, the chairpersons of the State Security Committee and the State Control Committee, the General Prosecutor and the Chairman of the Investigative Committee. Other officials appointed by the President on the recommendation of the State Secretary of the Security Council may also be members of the Security Council.

"Based on the current situation, the President proposed to extend the list of the Security Council members with the Defence Minister, the Interior Minister and the Chairman of the State Security Committee," Mr. Volfovich told journalists. According to him, a draft decree will be prepared and submitted to the President for approval.

One of the issues raised by the President at the meeting was maintaining stability and security in Belarus throughout this turbulent year. Aleksandr Lukashenko openly admits that this will be a very challenging year, 'not only because there is some misunderstanding about ongoing developments in socie-

ty but also because of the desire of some internal forces and, to a greater extent, foreign players, to destabilise the situation in Belarus'. He stated,

*"If it were not for external forces, there would have been no such pressure coming from all sides. Today they are already expressing their grievances about sport. They are trying to control us and tell us what to do. However, we will fix it. It's not a problem. You see that they are using all possible means to rock the boat in Belarus little by little. They are sending messages and taking action, all this is coming from abroad."*

## Guarding state interests

The President noted that the corresponding services have identified all these centres, all 'zmagary' and fugitives from Belarus, "However, knowing is not enough. We must fight back. How will we act if the situation gets worse? Everything must be planned down to the smallest detail, taking into account the experience of Belarus, Rus-

sia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine (Ukraine is in difficulties again), and other post-Soviet countries. We agreed on this a long time ago, and I think that you are ready for it," the President added.

In his talk to journalists, Mr. Volfovich didn't reveal all the proposals submitted to the President, for a variety of reasons. However, he made clear the vital points,

*"The security, defence and law enforcement agencies are capable of accomplishing law enforcement tasks in our country. They are ready for any change in the foreign or domestic situation."*

Mr. Volfovich stated with regret that, these days, mutual relations between countries tend to increasingly rely on the resolution of conflicts through force. Relations sometimes involve threats and blatant interference in the affairs of other countries. Belarus is no exception and it causes a certain instability in society. With this in mind, the official added that issues of persistent social and economic development of the country are coming to the fore, as never before. In this respect, the security, defence and law enforcement agencies aim to ensure the stable operation of the economic and political system of society.

"At present, the national security system created in our country can accomplish the most important tasks. Belarusians can rest assured that we will secure their right to peaceful work and a decent life," he said.



# Rights and regulations

**Europe hasn't yet got used to the fact that Belarus is not developing in line with their plans, stated our Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei while speaking at the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. According to him, Belarusians can proudly declare that their cities are among the safest in the world, that all citizens in the country are provided with employment opportunities, have the right to a pension, free education and one of the most affordable and effective systems of free medical care in the world.**

"Belarus managed to maintain all the social obligations of the state even during the most acute period of the coronavirus pandemic, despite the scepticism and criticism from many western states. At the same time, their policy of total isolation, restrictive measures and outright protectionism during this period exposed systemic socio-economic and social problems and led to massive violations of human rights against their citizens," the Foreign Minister said.

He noted that street riots in Belgium, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland and

France, accompanied by protesters' outrage and retaliatory police violence are still covered by the media. "Therefore, the claims of western countries to the role of an international supervisor and global mentor in the implementation of human rights in other countries look like a well-thought-out tactic to distract from their own problems," he said.

Vladimir Makei noted that many violations in Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and many other European countries of their own obligations in the field of human rights could be

listed. In this regard, the Belarusian side proposes to return the Human Rights Council and the UN as a whole to the geographical and political balance, to the essence of the organisation's mandate, to the fair and equal consideration of problematic human rights situations around the world.

The Foreign Minister stressed that no other country in Europe is subjected to such strong pressures from western countries as Belarus. At the same time, the West uses its favourite method in the form of economic sanctions, which is completely

incompatible with caring for people and their rights.

"It seems that some can't get used to the idea that, despite the tough political and economic pressure, the Belarusian state is not developing according to the patterns of the western states but as the Belarusian people themselves decide are in their own interests," Vladimir Makei noted.

For this independent position, Belarus was subjected to a brutal attack from the outside. The reason for this was the dissatisfaction on a part of the population with the results of the Presidential elections.

"In order to overthrow the acting government, all sorts of mechanisms were used to destabilise the internal situation, such as fake news on social media, stimulating the political and financial support from outside for allegedly 'spontaneous' protests and an extensive set of political and economic sanctions.

However, Belarus has survived. "We have preserved the country, its sovereignty and independence," the Foreign Minister emphasised.

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# Olympic horizons

Two issues were high on the agenda of the meeting of the National Olympic Committee: the election of the NOC new leadership and preparation for the upcoming Olympics in Tokyo. Viktor Lukashenko was appointed as the new NOC President, while Aleksandr Lukashenko's address to the Belarusian national team before going to the Games was laconic, "This is a special time. This has never happened. We must show that we are a nation. You should thank our people for what they have done so that athletes can compete and perform."

## A time for true patriots

The world of sports is not currently going through the best of times. The pandemic has closed arenas for many athletes and preparations for Tokyo are underway in a controversial environment. With regards to our country, truth be told, there are problems of a different nature. This is what the President pointed out when he opened the meeting,

Our best doctors treated their injuries free of charge. The state didn't abandon them when they were disqualified. Now they are begging international organisations for sanctions against our Olympic movement and the country in general."

Aleksandr Lukashenko said that it was due to them that Belarus was stripped of the right to host the 2021 IIHF World Championships and the 2021 World



asked senior officials from the Sports and Tourism Ministry what lessons were learnt from the Rio Olympics and what had been done to improve the training process. He also pointed at some flaws, "As always, there are many expectations and promises. Although the Olympic selection for Tokyo is not over yet, it is already clear that our team sports (with the exception of 3x3 basketball) have failed. There are no Olympic places in boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo and fencing yet. We can expect more from our wrestlers, track-and-field athletes and biathletes."

No one can argue that much has been done in recent years here to develop physical culture and sports. The Head of State mentioned some

key results: the material and technical base has been intensified and Belarus kept holding competitions and national championships despite the pandemic and widespread lockdowns...

Considering this, it seems fair and appropriate to make a state order for sportsmen. The Head of State explained,

*"The primary task in the coming months is to put together an efficient team for Tokyo. Excuses are not welcome, and there cannot be any!"*

An easy event isn't expected. Aleksandr Lukashenko understands and recognises this. However, he encouraged athletes, "We'll go there to fight, it will not be easy for us. There'll be attempts from all sides to crush us, the same way as is being done to Russia. We must withstand this. Real champions are those who are able to deliver results in any conditions, against all the odds,

in the face of fierce competition and interference of jealous people; the real champions are those who score impressive victories for their country, family and friends, coaches and teammates."

The Head of State also said that the Olympics will be held amidst unprecedented COVID-19 measures and restrictions, and this should be taken into account. "It's necessary to be prepared to address issues related to the acclimatisation of athletes, transfer of the delegation and equipment to the Olympic Village, the organisation of training, everyday life and medical services. Everything necessary for our athletes to perform well has been created. If more is needed, more will be done," he said.

## Motivation to fight

The Minister of Sports and Tourism, Sergei Kovalchuk, reported on the preparation for the Olympics. He noted that, at the final stage, about 260 athletes in 26 sports are preparing for the Games. To date, 74 athletes in 16 sports have fulfilled the qualification requirements and standards.

The Minister noted that, after the cancellation of most international competitions, selection for the Games resumed in November 2020 and for some sports it will continue until the end of June 2021. "The main task at this stage is the successful completion of the qualification selection for participation in the Games and the formation of the competitive composition of the Belarusian delegation," he added.

Mr. Kovalchuk also said that in sports where Olympic places are not registered, following the decision of the NOC of Belarus and the Sports and Tourism Ministry, the team will include athletes who are the most prepared, regardless of who won the places. By the end of the Olympic selection, it's planned that Belarusian athletes will take about 110-120 Olympic places. The Minister assured, "All athletes and coaches are motivated, set up for a serious competition and

have set ambitious goals. Established and new athletes who are able to represent our country in Tokyo have a chance at winning the medals."

## Choices made

The NOC Secretary General, Polina Golovina, initially proposed two candidates for the post of NOC President: Aleksandr Lukashenko and Viktor Lukashenko. However, the Head of State excused himself saying he had no plans to be nominated as the Head of the National Olympic Committee for another term. He addressed those present, "I ask you, if this is ok with you, to vote for my eldest son. I can vouch for him. There will be no theft, corruption, or misuse of money under his leadership. Athletes and coaches will be treated kindly and fairly. As for me, I will still keep in touch with what's going on in sport. I believe that no one else, even the Olympic champions that are present now, love sports more than me. I tried to give you as much as I could, I know what sport is about. It's my passion."

After voting, the elected President of the National Olympic Committee, Viktor Lukashenko, said that the post is a great responsibility for him. "I think together we'll contribute much to the development of sports and our country. We understand that the expectations will be great. However, we want to assure you that the NOC, together with the Sports and Tourism Ministry, federations and other stakeholders, will do their best to make sure Belarus performs well in any sporting competition," he noted.

At the end of the meeting, the President once again called on athletes and coaches to unite and mobilise before the Olympics. At the same time, he admitted that not every athlete can win a medal but must show a selfless competition.

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*"Unfortunately, our country and our people have come under severe pressures from all directions. They will resort to any means: from spreading outright fake news and creating an aggressive information environment to intimidation and attempting terrorist acts. Well-known 'sponsors' spend much money in destabilising society."*

Alas, not everyone has passed through this period with dignity. The Head of State noted that some athletes, mostly former ones, have also been sucked into this vortex of events, "These athletes were raised by our coaches in sport schools. They were provided with absolutely all the necessary conditions to combine their studies and training at the Olympic reserve schools and universities. The state gave them the opportunity to do sport professionally without being distracted by everyday problems.

Modern Pentathlon Championships. "These people have got their thirty pieces of silver. We will survive that; I don't think we have lost something big here. I will say only one thing: you cannot build happiness by betraying your homeland. May God be their judge," he added.

However, the Head of State believes,

*"We still have those of whom we are proud. The majority of Belarusian athletes are true patriots of their country, giving their talent, strength and energy for victories in the name of the Fatherland."*

## A path to the medal podium

Olympic medals are certainly the paramount stage of sporting glory. With this in mind, preparations for the Olympic Games in Tokyo were high on the agenda. Aleksandr Lukashenko

# Successful economic zones



The result is in: last year, the free economic zones attracted a record volume of direct foreign investments on a net basis

According to data published by the Economy Ministry, enterprises of the free economic zones employ now 5 percent of the average number of all workers countrywide. At the same time, these zones account for 23 percent of direct foreign investments on a net basis, 20.4 percent of exports of goods and 16.6 percent of industrial production in the 2020 Republican figures. The FEZ residents formed almost 5 percent of the country's GDP.

By Vladislav Sychevich

Compared to 2019, direct foreign investments on a net basis increased 1.5-fold — to reach \$307m while the volume of industrial production and sales revenue rose by 10 percent. At the same time, the FEZ residents paid 4 percent more of taxes and fees than in the previous year.

Of course, the situation with the pandemic affected the work of the zones. Under conditions with restrictions on doing business and the presence of foreign currency obligations, some FEZ residents registered a decreased net profit, while the average monthly salary of FEZ employees rose by 13 percent. In 2020, the FEZ attracted 43 new residents with total declared investments of about \$200m, of which about a half were with foreign capital.

The Minsk Free Economic Zone ended last year with a decent result. Its Head, Dmitry Rudchenko, tells us about new residents and plans to expand the area.

## A decent result

— Before we speak about the Minsk FEZ results, I'd like to know how it was affected by the crisis that had gripped the global economy?

— Of course, the crisis as a global phenomenon has had a certain impact on the work of Belarusian enterprises, as they are integrated into global economic processes. At the same time, our residents — thanks to timely measures taken — are able to adequately resist today's challenges. Most of the enterprises managed to maintain high economic indicators, their markets and jobs. The implementation of investment projects continues.

— In this case, I believe the results of the FEZ work at the end of the year weren't bad...

— In general, if we talk about the results of work in 2020, we should note a positive trend in the growth of production volumes, revenue from sales of products, exports of goods, production of import-substituting products, taxes paid by residents, fees and payments to the budget, an increase in wages of employees of the FEZ residents, as well as the creation of new jobs.

Some figures can be specifically quoted in this respect. Compared to 2019, industrial production increased by 15 percent to Br4.512bn (more than \$1.85bn equivalent), exports of goods by 11 percent to \$1,468bn, sales revenue by 20 percent to Br4,790bn (almost \$2bn), investments in fixed assets by 19 percent at comparable prices to Br272m (about \$112m). At the same time, the growth of direct foreign investments on a net basis increased 4.7 times to \$68m.

Pleasingly, under the conditions of the crisis caused by the pandemic, the Minsk FEZ residents worked with a net profit of Br217.3m (almost \$90m). Br397m (more than \$163m) of taxes and fees were paid to the budget and extra-budgetary funds — 18 percent more than in 2019.

## Projects for growth

— The Minsk FEZ companies work in different production spheres. What projects are being implemented here today?

— To date, 45 modern factories have been built on the area of the Minsk FEZ, in addition to engineering infrastructure. Several industrial facilities have been reconstructed. The activities of resident companies cover diverse production areas, with mechanical engineering, metalworking, automotive industry, production of building materials, electronics and printing being in the lead.

The largest and most significant investment projects embrace production of



Horizont Plant



ADANI is a high-tech enterprise, with a full innovation cycle



Stadler assembly facility at a Minsk FEZ cluster

electric trains and trams, components for protective roller shutters, gate systems, manufacturing of X-ray equipment, passenger cars, bimetallic bands, ring saws, aircraft repair works and production of cable products.

— It's no secret that, in the current conditions, it is not easy to increase exports. What's the share of export-oriented products in the total volume of industrial production?

— It's good to note that, over the past 4 years, exports by the Minsk FEZ residents exceed \$1bn; the trend for growth in volumes continues annually. I'd like to say with satisfaction that, in difficult or even crisis 2020, exports by residents of our economic zone increased by 11 percent to reach almost \$1.5bn.

In general, the share of exports in the total volume of industrial production last

year stood at 80.4 percent. Residents export their products to 80 countries and the geography of deliveries is constantly expanding. Although the main markets are those in Russia and the CIS, exports to non-CIS countries increased by 28 percent last year to make \$456m.

## Comfortable climate

— How attractive are the investment conditions? What are countries mostly interested in?

— Such factors as favourable transport and geographical location, availability of industrial and social infrastructure, preferential conditions for economic activity, transparent and simplified administrative procedures and legally guaranteed investment protection all contribute to the formation of a favourable investment climate in the Minsk FEZ and enhance competitive

## FACT

As of January 1st, 2021, 440 business entities were registered as residents in all free economic zones. Projects involving investments from more than 30 countries are being implemented for a total amount of declared investments of about \$7bn.

advantages of its residents.

As a result, interest in us is growing. In 2020, despite the crisis, 16 new residents came to the FEZ — indicating that a favourable investment climate has been created. A total of 119 resident companies are registered in the Minsk FEZ and among them are medium-sized enterprises and market leaders. Landmark investment projects with multi-million turnover confirm that it's comfortable and profitable to work in Belarus. The main investor countries are Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, and China.

— Speaking about the immediate future, what are the plans of the FEZ administration and how many new jobs are likely to be created while the new projects are being realised?

— Further development will be carried out through the implementation of investment projects by both existing and potential residents. In the future, implementation of projects in the field of mechanical engineering, instrument making and 'green' technologies is expected.

To create favourable conditions for the implementation of investment projects, the administration will also continue working on the further development of engineering and transport infrastructure.

When implementing new projects by the residents, as well as taking into account the development of energy infrastructure for mastering areas of promising development, by 2025, about \$380m of investments are to be attracted to establish efficient production facilities and create about 4,000 high-performance jobs.

# Southern Polesie in focus

## A new oil field discovered in Khoyniki District

Belarusian oil workers are actively developing the southern Polesie area, in the Gomel Region. A new 'black gold' deposit has been discovered in the Khoyniki District and large-scale seismic explorations in neighbouring Lelchitsy, Yelsk, Narovlya and Bragin districts are next in line. This is the largest oil search in the history of Belarus. At the same time, our specialists have learned to extract the most difficult-to-reach oil through kilometres of rock, minimising production costs every year.



By Stanislav Galkovsky

### Four kilometres down

The 'black gold' rises up from a depth of 4,200 metres and, so far, the inflow is 20 cubic metres per day. Well No.1, Vostochno-Izbynskaya, is the main oil-bearing artery at the new field. Drilling expert Miron Ilkiv, a specialist with 40 years of experience who has drilled over a hundred wells, commented on the Khoyniki site, "We work around the clock and oil is definitely present here. There is definitely oil. Geologists have assessed the deposit and up to 50 tonnes of 'light' oil can be extracted without the use of additional technologies. This, however, is a forecast and only time will tell how much we'll actually make."

It's believed that a half a million tonnes of underground carbon is deposited here. This is the fourth discovery for the Khoyniki District in two years.

The region is gradually becoming oil rich. Furthermore, to study the resource potential of the central structural zone of the Pripyat Trough, Belarusneft's specialists plan to drill 13 exploration wells by the end of 2021. Further work on extracting the most important energy resource will most likely be carried out by the cluster method which has proven itself well in the Belarusian swamps.

### In line with a Siberian method

Cluster construction, primarily of inclined wells, was widespread in swampy Western Siberia. After echelon-type machines were put into operation at Belarusneft's Svetlogorsk Drilling Operations Department, this method of well construction has gained momentum in our country. The major cluster is registered in the Rechitsa deposit; it unites 14 wells at close distances



from each other. This is a sort of a network of three injection and 11 production wells.

Viktor Arkhipenko heads the Svetlogorsk Drilling Operations Department. He explains, "Compact drilling, when wells are located at a distance of about 30 metres from one another, makes it possible to significantly save money on the assembly and disassembly

### ADDITION

Over 55 years of operation, Belarusian oil workers have produced more than 138m tonnes of oil and drilled over 7m metres of rock. According to geologists, the balance reserves of 'black gold' in Belarus are now about 46m tonnes, and these should be enough for at least another 35 years.

of a facility and supply of all communication systems."

### American efficiency

Oil production in Belarus began 55 years ago. At that time, the rich Rechitsa deposit was called a Belarusian Kuwait. However, the days of 'light' oil (up to a record of eight million tonnes per year) are over. Belarusian 'black

gold' today is hard to extract and Belarusneft's specialists use the latest technologies in the process, such as American 'Plug&Perf' which makes it possible to develop oil-bearing horizons of new and partially developed fields more widely.

Denis Zakruzhny, the Head of Belarusneft's Well Technologies and Service Department, explains, "We've started production of hard-to-recover oil by conducting a cluster multi-stage hydraulic fracturing. The main advantage of this technology is that it creates a large, drained area in a short time. It is promising and cost-effective, significantly increasing the effective life of the well."

In the coming five years, Belarusian oil workers are targeting new territories, including southern Polesie. The volume of seismic exploration will exceed the size of the work carried out over the past 25 years, as noted by Belarusneft's Deputy General Director for Geology, Piotr Povzhik. "According to our data, this is a very promising region. On the right bank of the Pripyat, we are going to undertake five thousand square kilometres of seismic work and, in 2023, we plan to start drilling the first exploratory wells in the southern structural zone (Lelchitsy District). The development of this field will enable us to increase oil production in Belarus in the future. Preliminary estimates indicate the presence of more than 20m tonnes of oil resources there."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### In 2020, China became Belarus' second biggest trade partner after Russia



"Bilateral trade between Belarus and China amounted to \$4.6bn, exceeding the indicator from 2019 by \$0.8m. Exports of Belarusian goods increased by 9.4 percent (\$776.9m) while imports decreased by 1.7 percent (\$3,840.5m). The trade balance was in favour of China, while the gap narrowed by 4.1 percent," noted the Belarusian Embassy in China.

Agricultural and woodworking products became the driver of Belarusian exports to China, demonstrating a two-fold increase. To date, 105 Belarusian agricultural producers have been accredited in China.

"Despite the slowdown in business activity across the world, Belarus and China have stabilised the dynamics of bilateral foreign trade turnover," the Belarusian diplomatic mission said.

### Grodno becomes Belarus' new youth capital

The regional centre took over the honorary baton from Pinsk. The project originated in 2015, the Year of Youth. The Republican event, entitled *Grodno, the Youth Capital*, gathered more than 300 young people from all over the country: students, young deputies, rep-



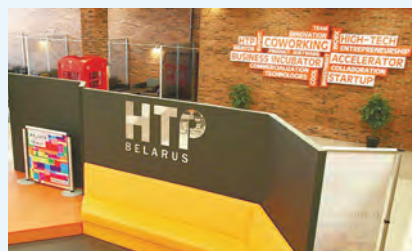
resentatives of youth parliaments and working youth.

Later, the Republican forum *Belarus. Youth. Unity* took place, as well as awards for the winners of the Republican Universiade-2020. *Together for Strong and Prosperous Belarus* civil-patriotic marathon was also organised.

Throughout the year, Grodno will be hosting numerous sports and cultural events for youth, as well as intellectual games and tasks, flash mobs and much more. At the same time, traditional cultural events will also be held with an emphasis on young people.

### Hi-Tech Park residents enter top-100 outsourcers in the world

The rating, compiled by the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals (IAOP), includes both large world leaders and small, fast-growing companies with annual revenues of less than \$50m and the number of employees less than 5,000 people. The association selected the best, relying on four criteria: customer reviews, innovative solutions, certificates and awards re-



ceived by the company, and corporate social responsibility projects.

The 2021 *Global Outsourcing 100* list includes residents of HTP: AIQA (Quality Technologies JSC), Itransition (Itransition JSC) and SolbegSoft (SolbegSoft LLC). The rating also includes foreign companies with Belarusian development centres registered with the HTP: Ciklum, IBA Group, Intetics and Artezio.

### Belarusfilm Studio's official YouTube awarded silver button

The silver button is an award given to the owner of a channel that has united one hundred thousand users. Now the YouTube channel of Belarusfilm has 407,000 subscribers, with some videos getting more than 900,000 views.

"We started filling the channel about two years ago. A third of our products are presented there: animated pictures and films and video recordings of meetings with famous figures in the film industry. But, according to the technology, new films get there only after the official premiere. Therefore, we have plans to work on new products that will be created exclusively for the YouTube channel," they



announced, at the film studio. The number of subscribers to the channel is growing daily: it increases by about a thousand per day. Furthermore, a separate channel was recently created for the studio's animation projects.

# Our own effective vaccine

## Belarusian vaccine will be effective against SARS-CoV-2 mutations

As the pandemic progresses, the SARS-CoV-2 pathogen is constantly evolving. Until May-June 2020, mutations were relatively insignificant, but there are already many varieties of the virus; these are gradually replacing the original version. Currently, it is being studied whether the available vaccines are effective against new mutations. In the future, this will also be relevant for Belarus, because now work is underway on the country's first vaccine. BelTA asked Andrei Goncharov, the Director of the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, who heads the working group, to tell us more.

### From scratch in three years

The Belarusian vaccine is being developed from scratch. Actually, it's the first domestic vaccine for the prevention of infectious human diseases. Previously, Belarusian scientists created vaccines for the prevention of diseases in animals. Two organisations are involved: the Republican Scientific-Practical Centre of Epidemiology and Microbiology and the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering at the National Academy of Sciences. Scientists are now engaged in the first stage: development of a prototype which will then be evaluated for immunogenic properties in vitro. This will be followed by animal testing, industrial adaptation, and clinical trials. At this stage, the Belarusian State Medical University and Gomel's Medical University will join.

Development of a new vaccine — even on the basis of well-known technologies — is not quick. According to scientists, it will take a year and a half to create a prototype. The final result — a vaccine that can be safely used — will become available within three years. “There is a possibility that we'll be able to do this much faster,” said Mr. Goncharov.

### Preferred vaccine

Many people worry whether the Belarusian vaccine will be effective against existing strains of SARS-CoV-2, as well as new mutations. The scientist comments, “The advantage



of inactivated whole-virion vaccines is that they contain the entire spectrum of viral proteins, that is, we use a whole vaccine virus. Therefore, immunity will be formed not only to the S-protein or M-protein, but to a variety of components. Some of them are subject to mutations, others are not. Thanks to this approach, we expect a high effectiveness of the drug.

The British-Swedish company — AstraZeneca — said that the vaccine developed jointly with the University of Oxford might not be effective enough against the South African strain of coronavirus. It will take 6-9 months to finalise. In our case, the inactivated vaccine will include not only the SARS-CoV-2

S-protein, but also a huge number of other virus proteins. It's believed that such vaccines will be preferable in conditions when there is an active mutation of the virus and new strains appear that differ in their immunogenic, biological properties.

It's possible that the antigenic composition of the vaccine

will have to be updated every year due to the appearance of different strains, as is now the case with the flu vaccine.

### Against the flu

The coronavirus is not the last pandemic. Tedros Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation

(WHO), also recalled the cyclical nature of pandemics. Humanity is constantly faced with new viruses. There have been several recent outbreaks of Ebola in Africa. “We need to be ready to develop the means for their prevention in a very short time,” he said. Moreover, against the background of the current epidemic, WHO has warned about such a problem as the unfair distribution of vaccines between countries. Moreover, recently, Europe has raised the issue of banning exports of vaccines produced in the European Union to other countries.

“If there are other mass diseases, pandemics, maybe even with much greater lethality, no one will just give us a vaccine. First of all, those countries that are ready to buy the vaccine for a very large sum of money will vaccinate themselves. Therefore, I'm sure that Belarus should have its own domestic technology and base for creating such vaccines, which will allow it not to have to depend on anyone,” Mr. Goncharov believes.

Moreover, on the basis of the available technology, it will be possible to develop vaccines for the prevention of other diseases. The established centre for experimental and applied virology won't be idle. “We're already thinking about what topical infections we'll be able to develop and produce vaccines against in the future. First of all, we are talking about the flu. Why not? The competence of our specialists enables us to solve such problems,” he said.

Based on materials of belta.by



# The first herald of spring

It won't be long before the scattering of tulips will decorate our streets, pleasing the eye after the grey winter days, and the ladies will be given fresh and fragrant bouquets on March 8th. On the eve of International Women's Day, flowers in Belarusian greenhouses are gaining in beauty and waiting for their finest hour.

By Victoria Derzhanovich

In the early morning, growers of the Minsk Hothouse-Hotbed Vegetables Growing Integrated Plant cut tulips and roses in greenhouses, which will soon go on sale. This year, the enterprise plans to supply 170,000 tulips, ten thousand more than last year's figure. Maria Rudko, who heads the shop, explains, “This is due to the high consumer demand for our flowers in pre-holiday days. High quality Dutch bulbs are purchased for their cultivation. This year, we bought peony tulips. Their peculiarity is that the bud is composed of

two or even more rows of petals.”

The temperature in the greenhouse differs little from that outside, with flowers ‘ripening’ in slender rows in containers with soil. “To grow tulips by spring, the bulbs are planted in the ground in November. The optimal temperature for growing is nine degrees. The bud, which initially grows green, should be completely coloured in its own colour,” noted Ms. Rudko.

Tulips — unpretentious in care — are a seasonal product at the plant. They are grown exclusively for the spring holidays. But the rose queen of flowers grows in greenhouses all year

round and requires special attention. White, burgundy, crimson, orange, yellow, cream... The company supplies roses in a rich colour palette to retail outlets.

According to Ms. Rudko, during the holidays, the company sells about 50,000 prickly beauties. “We grow 25 varieties of roses. Each is unique in its own way, like our beautiful Belarusian women,” she added.

The plant is studying the most advanced experience in floriculture. The greenhouses in which the roses grow are automated: information about the temperature and humidity level in the

room is sent to the computer of operators who work around the clock. If necessary, they can adjust certain parameters or add fertiliser with just a few keystrokes.

They cut roses in the morning — but not all, only those with a certain degree of buds opening. The next stage is sorting, because the flowers must arrive at the buyer in perfect condition.

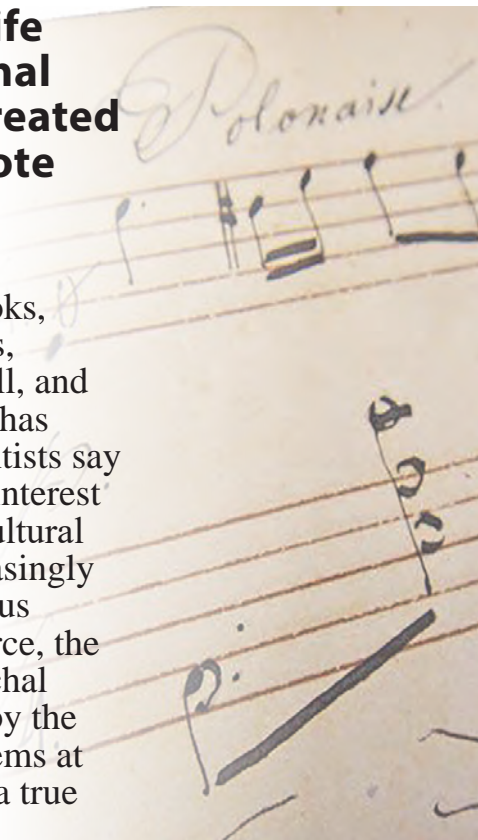
In addition, in order for the bouquet to please the eye for longer, the agronomists at the enterprise advise people to change the water every day, shorten the stems by about a centimetre and put the bouquet in a cool place.



wikipedia.org

## Oginski has come back to life in a digital form: the National Academy of Sciences has created a unique resource to promote Belarusian history

How do we know about the events of the past? This is mostly thanks to books, textbooks or movies. As for museums, people visit them of course, but not all, and the current epidemiological situation has created obstacles. Nevertheless, scientists say that the pandemic has sharpened the interest of Belarusians in the historical and cultural heritage of their land. They are increasingly interested in castles, events and famous people from the past. A unique resource, the Historical and Cultural Centre of Michal Oginski's Digital Heritage authored by the United Institute of Informatics Problems at the National Academy of Science, is a true gift to history lovers.



# Learning more about the Motherland

By Vera Arteaga

### Polonaise and more

Life. Fate. Time. These words recall Michal Oginski who is known by all for his famous polonaise. Its real name was slightly different to that which is used: *Farewell to the Motherland*.

The musician's work is certainly interesting to many. Natalia Mukha, a deputy scientific head of the project and a researcher of the design process automation laboratory at the United Institute of Informatics Problems, believes Oginski was a landmark personality. "We know him more as a composer and polonaise writer, but he's a much more multi-faceted person. Furthermore, he's a significant figure for Belarusians and global culture, as confirmed in 2015 which was proclaimed the Year of Oginski by UNESCO," she explains.

The statesman, politician, diplomat and musician participated in many significant events during his time and left a considerable cultural and historical heritage. Among them are waltzes, mazurkas, dances, minuets, romances, polonaises and operas. Interestingly, music was simply a hobby for Oginski. He was primarily a civil servant and occupied important positions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Rzech Pospolita and the Russian Empire, playing a major role in the state, social and political lives of many different countries. He also created a rich literary legacy: *Memoirs of*

*Poland and the Poles, Observations, Letters about Music*, and others.

### History through personality

The project, created by the laboratory head at the Historical and Cultural Centre of Michal Oginski's Digital Heritage, Lilia Gubich, took three years to develop. It's now truly unique for a number of reasons. Firstly, the history of that time is presented through the prism of a famous person's life. It was an epoch rich in major historical events, such as the split of the Rzech Pospolita and the 1812 war against Napoleon. The project reveals the history of Western Europe at the time when Oginski was a diplomat, as well as the histories

of modern Belarus, Poland and Russia. It was Oginski, as a privy council and a senator of the Russian Empire, who drafted the autonomous divisions of our country. Information about the people with whom he communicated is also available.

Ms. Mukha adds that this is the first digital historical and cultural project for Belarus and its neighbours. "The uniqueness of the project is that it's the first of its kind to link digitalisation with promotion of the cultural heritage of Belarus. In addition, it unites the work of many museums, giving a wide audience access to archives, as well as new research on this topic. We often had to search hard for the information, espe-



Natalia Mukha

### Digital information arouses interest

The work on the project is complete but the information has yet to be supplemented. Ms. Mukha adds, "In 2008, our Russian colleagues sent Oginski's unique archives to Belarus' National Historical Museum. We want to make them available to visitors of the Historical and Cultural Centre of Michal Oginski's Digital Heritage. People are already waiting for updates and we have registered an interest from a few Lithuanians: Oginski had estates on their land as well. This means museums also do work there."

Of course, Belarusian museums and educational institutions will receive the most complete information about Oginski. According to Ms. Mukha, the National Historical Museum, the Oginski Estate Museum in Zalesie, the M.K. Oginski Heritage Charitable Foundation, the M.K. Oginski Molo-dechno State Music College and the Belarusian State Archive-Museum of Literature and Music have already shown an interest in the project. Negotiations are also underway with the National Agency for Tourism regarding the preparation of *Along Oginski's Paths* tourist routes.

Another important result of the work, the researcher reveals, is the preparation of a draft of methodological recommendations for the creation of similar resources for preservation of the cultural heritage. This has also been done for the first time. "The methodological and instrumental tools for the digital transformation of historical and cultural information are soon to be compiled, becoming the basis for further work," Ms. Mukha explains.

There are already ideas for further projects. Authors plan to join historians to systematise information for the general public on the Enlightenment era in Belarus and, of course, famous Belarusian figures of that time.



History of the past revealed through the prism of a famous person's life



Oginski Estate Museum in Zalesie

cially about Oginski's ancestors and descendants. For example, not everyone knows that his great-great-grandfather, Bogdan Marcjan, helped publish the world's first alphabet book," she says.

Given the scale of the work, the resource about this historical figure can be considered the most substantial. It's true that networks have provided different information, but this cannot be compared. "There are museum sites, but they only talk about exhibitions. There are archives, but not everyone can get access to them. The goal was to create a resource for a wide audience that would promote the history of the country," the scientist notes.



# Niagara Falls covered in ice

## Niagara Falls has turned into a spectacular winter wonderland amid a brutal winter storm that has swept over a vast swath of the USA

Temperatures dropped to as low as -2F in Niagara, as tourists observed stunning displays of ice clinging on at the top of the waterfall.

Large chunks of ice could be seen flowing over the tremendous volume of water, with the mist forming a beautiful rainbow.

Breath-taking images show mounds of untouched snow and ice forming along the banks of the falls and river, creating a stunning wintry scene.

Steam was seen rising up from the

Falls because the water temperature is warmer than the freezing air. And though some photos show what looks like frozen solid Falls, the water actually never stops flowing.

According to Niagara Falls USA, ice forms on the river every winter. But the extent of the Falls actually freezing over depends on extreme cold weather lingering for long periods of time like the polar vortex events of 2014 and 2015, which can result in 'frozen falls' photos.

Niagara Falls has been hit with the snow and freezing weather that has wreaked havoc across the US in recent weeks. Craters of ice were seen floating on the water at the bottom of the falls, while the surrounding trees and bushes were covered in snow and ice.

While Niagara Falls was covered in ice, so was nearby Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. An astonishing 86 percent of Lake Erie was covered in ice, according to the National Weather Service.

# China declares victory in ending extreme poverty

**Chinese President Xi Jinping says his country has achieved the 'miracle' of eradicating extreme poverty**

His government says that over an eight-year period, nearly 100m people have been lifted out of poverty.

Speaking at a ceremony in Beijing, Mr. Xi said it was a 'complete victory' that would 'go down in history'. "No other country can lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in such a short time," President Jinping said.

China defines extreme rural poverty as annual per capita income of less than 4,000 Yuan (\$620), or about \$1.69 a day at current exchange rates. That compares with the World Bank's global threshold of \$1.90 a day.

In his speech, Mr. Xi said the 'arduous task of eradicating extreme poverty has been fulfilled'. "According to the current criteria, all 98.99m poor rural population have been taken out of poverty, and 832 poverty-stricken counties as well as 128,000 villages have been removed from the poverty list," he said.

Eradicating rural poverty has been a key initiative of Mr. Xi's eight-year tenure.

China announced late last year that it had removed the last remaining counties from a list of poor regions, which officials said meant it had achieved the goal of eliminating extreme poverty by the end of 2020.

In a glitzy ceremony in Beijing, President Jinping bestowed medals on officials from rural communities, some wearing traditional ethnic-minority attire, and promised to share this 'Chinese example' with other developing nations.

## Ancient kangaroo painting

Australian scientists have discovered the country's oldest known rock art — a 17,300-year-old painting of a kangaroo

The artwork measuring 2m was painted in red ochre on the ceiling of a rock shelter. It was found in Western Australia's Kimberley Region, known for its Aboriginal rock paintings.

Its age was determined by radiocarbon-dating ancient mud wasp nests. The findings were published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*.

Researcher Damien Finch, who pioneered the mud wasp dating technique, said it was rare to find mud wasp nests both on top and underneath a single artwork. But the team was able to sample both types to establish the artwork's minimum and maximum ages.

"We radiocarbon dated three wasp nests underlying the painting and three nests built over it to determine, confidently, that the painting is between 17,500 and 17,100 years old; most likely 17,300 years old," said Dr. Finch, a geochronologist from the University of Melbourne.

Scientists say this estimation makes the artwork the oldest known intact painting in Australia.

The study's co-author Dr. Sven Ouzman, from the University of Western Australia, added there could be a link between the kangaroo painting and the ancient art from other regions.



## Leonardo da Vinci's 'cipher' deciphered

**Researchers claim that the Renaissance portraits of the Madonna and Child are based on artefacts from Arab and Persian traditions**

An international team of scientists led by Pier Giorgio Righetti, a Professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan, has revealed one of the secrets of Leonardo da Vinci's creative style (1452–1519) and his art school.

The results of the study were published in the journal *Digital Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*, Gleb Zilberstein, one of the participants in the project, who works in Israel, noted.

He explained that the basis of the Renaissance images of the Madonna and Child Jesus is the radial arrangement of elements, which comes from the Arab and Persian tradition and becomes typical for both the masterpieces of the Renaissance genius and his school.

"Using digital technology, we have analysed the technique of radial arrangement of elements from ancient times to the Renaissance, and we can confidently say that this 'Da Vinci seal'



is a kind of template for the works of Leonardo's school, a kind of 'Da Vinci cipher'," said Mr. Zilberstein.

"After the fall of Constantinople, the canons of Orthodox church iconography came under the strong influence of Eastern culture, including in Italy, which influenced the formation of the artistic style of the Renaissance, and in particular the style of Leonardo," he added.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**





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# Wild and amazingly beautiful

Personal exhibition of the Dutch photographer Leonardus Buijs, *The Treasury of Belarus*, takes place at the University of Culture Art Gallery in Minsk

By Irina Sergeeva

The exhibition includes photos of Belarus' wildlife. "The photographer travels around the country in search of interesting pictures and during his trips becomes acquainted with new places and new people; in just 8 months he has travelled about 14,000km. In his work, Leonardus Buijs shows the beauty of Belarusian nature, as well as its uniqueness and fragility. His view from the outside on landscapes, familiar for Belarusians, helps unite the world of wild nature. In search of the perfect picture, the photographer polishes his skills and is constantly searching," note the organisers of the exhibition.

The wild nature of our land, captured by the Dutch photographer, appears in all its glory before the Minsk residents and visitors to the capital. The exhibition includes unusual photos of animals and birds living in Belarus in their natural environments. They hunt, pay court, look after their partners, show character, take care of their offspring...

Leonardus Buijs, a 62-year-old photographer with a diploma from the International Federation of Photographic Art, was born in the Netherlands. He has been living in Minsk for about a year now and has become a member of the Minsk People's Photo Club. Before moving to Belarus, he chaired a photo club in the city of Echt for five years, and during this time has risen to a high status in the Netherlands. The expert held master classes and organised photo trips while also lecturing and teaching beginners.

You can learn about the wild nature of Belarus through the lens of the Dutch photographer until March 9th.



# Gromnitsy arrives, take off your mittens

Those in Belarusian Polesie know why candles are sometimes eaten and what spring will hold, as in the last winter month they have the authentic Slavic holiday of Gromnitsy. This day in the national calendar means the meeting of winter with spring.

By Yelena Terentyeva

Perhaps you heard the thunder in winter too? They say this can only happen in mid-February, the only time during the winter months. In ancient times, these thunderstorms were explained simply: Perun the Thunderer lets the people know that frosts are losing their strength and transferring their dominion over to the warm winds. Very soon they will bring summer on their wings. However, Perun is a harsh god and people were afraid of him, so they praised him in every possible way, trying to protect themselves. This is how a pagan tradition appeared, the Gromnitsy folk festival. By coincidence, Christians began to celebrate the Meeting of the Lord at this time (Catholics, on February 2nd and Orthodox believers, on February 15th).

## The stuff of life

Bread is honoured during Gromnitsy in many regions: a lush loaf is baked; a Christmas tree is placed in it and those in attendance can taste it. There will be bread, there will be songs! They lead two round dances separately: young girls perform the winter circle dances while women, the summer dances. When they meet, they sing about their winter troubles and praise the summer. Then they take out a wheel decorated with ribbons and begin to sing ritual songs so that as 'the wheel rolls, the sun rolls over into the summer'. They also dance in pairs with a stamping of



feet, as if stamping the snow into the ground.

## Let's go ride with the beauty!

People in the village of Novoe Polesie, in the Gomel Region, are the first to start inviting in spring with their songs, round dances and magical rituals.

The Christmas tree decorated with paper flowers is considered to be a symbol of the Gromnitsy holiday, symbolising eternal life, memories of ancestors and the ritual of transition from one season to another.

They decorate the Christmas tree and, while singing a traditional song, hand it to a young girl, the men then take her to the centre of the village on a sled. At every crossroads are different round dances, danced with candles in their hands.

## Pancakes

Gromnitsy is a festival for living fire, which they try to create using the ancient method of rubbing wooden sticks together.

Then the 'gromnichnik' is chosen, a man who lights candles from the fire to give to all those present, then a bigger fire is made, and the round dances and games immediately begin.

Young girls knock loudly on tins, so that the spring can hear their call. They

also bake round, golden pancakes which are thrown in a stack across the gardens. Each neighbour throws pancakes to their own neighbours to pave the way for the sun to visit each house.

## Burn, burn bright!

The symbol of both church and national holidays is candles. According to the tradition, on this day they are consecrated with a special prayer, and after that they are called 'gromnichnye'. These are usually found behind icons. Whatever event happened, whether joyful or sad, they were lit. Pieces of these candles were worn as protective amulets, taken on a long journey or to an important meeting, they were even given to eat as medicine for seriously ill patients. Furthermore, people also burnt them during a severe thunderstorm so that lightning wouldn't destroy the house.

## Weather forecast

On Gromnitsy, people closely watched the weather. 'Winter is angry during Gromnitsy, but it's time to say goodbye', goes the saying. If there is a thaw, the spring will be early and warm; if there is a strong frost, the cold will last for a long time and if it snows, the spring will be rainy.

This year there was both snow and frost for the festival, so it doesn't seem worth the wait for early spring.

# Jumping over borders

## Belarusian Athletics Championship brings European hopes

By Dmitry Komashko

World athletics is just beginning to make its way out of the snow and peek out of the quarantine restrictions. The European Athletics Indoor Championships, which kick off today, will be the first major international competition in the past 18 months. It will be a serious test that will allow us to assess who did what during the pandemic. However, it was possible to compare expectations and get a rough idea of the Belarusian ambitions in Toruń even before the start of the tournament. At the Belarusian Championship in Mogilev, the leaders of the national team decided who will go to Poland and why.

The Olimpiets Sports Complex is a familiar place for Belarusian athletes. It's here that the lion's share of the iconic events take place in winter, and therefore the paths and areas are familiar. The entourage is also familiar. While, throughout Europe, only echoes in empty stands can reflect the triumphant shouts of athletes, the real atmosphere of competition was felt in Mogilev. Yes, the snowfall that hit the city adjusted the plans of those who were going to join the stands, and the guard with a thermometer at the entrance was bored most of the time. However, at the same time, the surroundings of the championship differed little from the standards to which the Belarusian Athletic Federation has aspired in recent years.

The most intriguing performances were announced on the sprint track and in the jump events. Elvira German finished third at the last European Indoor Athletics Championships two years ago, completing the 60m hurdles within 8 seconds. This time, she posted her Glasgow bronze result during the preliminary race. In the final, she rewrote her personal record — 7.91! The figures are great, no matter how you look at them. We remember that, in Glasgow, at the last European Championships only the Dutch Nadine Visser ran faster (and even then not by much). We notice the still reddened eye of Elvira German herself, hit recently by a baseball — thrown unsuccessfully by a thrower — and because of which the athlete missed two weeks of training at the most crucial moment. Elvira smiled and said that she would be ready for the performance in Toruń and wouldn't be going there for bronze. At the same time, she admitted that at the start of the Belarusian Championship it was unusually exciting. The rivals were very close, and it was these



Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova gave a spectacular series of jumps



In the dramatic final, Svetlana Parakhonko, Ruslana Rashkovan, Elvira German and Alina Talai competed for tickets to the European Championships

### Who participates in the European Championships

**60m hurdles:** Vitaly Parakhonko, Elvira German, Svetlana Parakhonko, Ruslana Rashkovan

**60m:** Kristina Timanovskaya, Yuri Zabolotny, Denis Bliznets, Maksim Bogdan

**400m:** Anna Mikhailova, Kristina Mulyarchik

**1,500m:** Darya Borisevich

**High jump:** Maksim Nedosekov, Karina Demidik

**Long jump:** Vladislav Bulakhov, Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova

**Triple jump:** Maksim Nesterenko, Violetta Skvortsova, Irina Vaskovskaya

**Pole vaulting:** Irina Zhuk

**Shot put:** Dmitry Karpuk, Alena Dubitskaya

**Heptathlon:** Maksim Andraloit, Vitaly Zhuk



aces that were expected to decide the fate of three places to the European Championships. Ruslana Rashkovan and Svetlana Parakhonko are really pressing her. In the preliminary round, Parakhonko was even ahead of Alina Talai, and Rashkovan was only 0.01 seconds behind her. In the final, Alina greatly improved her speed and won 0.04 seconds against Rashkovan, but still the answer to the question about the second place at this distance wasn't fixed.

In the hurdle sprint, four Belarusians showed the results of the European Championships final. As a result, German, Talai and Rashkovan were expected to go to Toruń, but a few days ago, Alina Talai was forced to withdraw due to recurrence of an injury. She will be replaced by Svetlana Parakhonko.

In jumps, only the pole remained without top results in Mogilev. Matvey Volkov



Maksim Nedosekov will try to get closer to his best results in Toruń

marked the receipt of official permission to represent Belarus at the international level with a men's world record — 5.60m — but he set it in Polish Lodz. Irina Zhuk,

who recently updated the Belarusian record, also missed the national championship. However, Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova got to Mogilev, showing miracles of self-control and professionalism. The day before, she participated in the Belarusian People's Congress in Minsk, and in the morning of the next day she entered the arena at the national championship and gave a spectacular series of jumps, the best of which saw her reach 6.73m.

In the high jump, all attention was focused on Maksim Nedosekov and Karina Demidik. Maksim managed to take 2.23m. In previous years, in his case it would have been just a 'warm up', but this winter wasn't easy for our jumper. Therefore, even after the awards ceremony, he was as collected and focused as possible. He said that he was getting less stress, and explained his previous failures by experiments with spiked shoes. Now he has returned to the previous ones and the athlete himself, almost straight from the Olimpiets, went to Poland. There was an opportunity to test himself at a tournament in Toruń — exactly on the eve of the European Championships, which for Nedosekov will also have an important psychological significance. In addition, in Poland, Nedosekov not only improved the result, but also rewrote Belarus' indoor record which now stands at 2.34m, and this is the most serious application for the European Championships!

Demidik also performed in Toruń and the athlete repeated her personal record back in Mogilev, taking 1.94m. Only three athletes went above this mark in Europe this season.

## ARENA



### ● Irina Zhuk renews her national pole vault record

The Belarusian athlete won the prestigious World Indoor Tour series in Madrid with a new national record. Irina Zhuk was competing for first place and, during one of her attempts, set the bar at 4m 67cm. The Belarusian conquered this height on her first try; the previous national record, which also belonged to her, was passed by 1cm.

Second place in Madrid was taken by Tina Šutej from Slovenia while third place went to Canadian Alysha Newman.

Irina Zhuk previously fulfilled the qualifying standard for participation in the Tokyo Games.

### ● Belarusians win 12 awards at the Aleksei Yukov Memorial Boxing Tournament

The tournament for boxers born from 2002-2003 was held in Gomel. It was most successful for Kirill Levankov (56kg) and Andrei Viktorovich (75kg), who both claimed the gold.

Silver went to Andrei Masalov (81kg) and Vitaly Ostanin (91kg). Meanwhile, bronze medals were earned by Stanislav Koren-



kov and Maksim Krupovsky (both 60kg), Aleksandr Dovnar, Roman Malinovsky (both 64kg), Stanislav Shuplyakov,

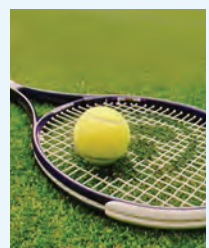
Vladislav Moradi (both 69kg), Aleksandr Prudnikov (81kg), and Maksim Kudryavtsev (91kg).

The event, that ended in Gomel, is included in the competition calendar of the European Boxing Confederation. For Belarusian athletes, it has become one of the key stages of selection for the world championships for this age category.

Athletes from Spain, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and Uzbekistan came together to honour the memory of the only Belarusian boxer who became the champion of the USSR, six-time champion of the BSSR, five-time winner of the events for the All-Union Society Dinamo, bronze medallist at the 8th Spartakiad for the People of the USSR, and winner of many international tournaments.

### ● Belarusian tennis players retain their positions in the world rankings

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) updated its rankings on March 1st. The best Belarusian female player, Arina Sobolenko, is still in 8th place with



4,810 points. In the doubles ranking, Arina Sobolenko and Belgian Elise Mertens occupy the leading positions. Viktoria Azarenko is placed 14th with 3,535 points, Aleksandra Sasnovich has 838 points and is 96th while Olga Govortsova is 138th with 572 points. Vera Lapko is 280th with 237 points.



## Photo of the week

Warm weather comes to Belarus

Vitaly Pivovarchik

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**March 4th** is Police Day in the Republic of Belarus. On March 4th, 1917, by the order of the civil commandant of the city of Minsk, Mikhail Mikhailov (according to passport data,

his real name was Mikhail Frunze) was appointed temporary head of the militia of the All-Russian Zemsky Union for the protection of order in the city of Minsk. This date is considered to be the birthday of the Belarusian police. Today, the Interior Ministry of Belarus is a Republican government body that fights crime and maintains public order while ensuring public safety.

**On March 5th, 1896.** Kondrat Krapiva (real name Atrakhovich) was born (in the village of Nizok, Uzda District, Minsk Region), a Belarusian playwright, writer, linguist, public figure, People's Writer of Belarus (1956), academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (1950), Doctor of Philology (1953), Hero of Socialist Labour (1975), and Honoured Scientist of Belarus (1978). He was the Director of the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of



Belarus, Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. He is the author of the plays *Who Laughs Last*, *Dear Man, People and Devils*, *Larks Are Singing*, etc. He is also a winner of the USSR State Prize (1941, 1951, 1971) and Belarus State Prize (1974). He died in 1991. In 1996, in connection with the 100th anniversary of the birth of the People's Writer of Belarus, Kondrat Krapiva, a memorial plaque was installed on the house where he lived in Minsk.



**On March 5th, 1936,** in violation of the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty, the German Armed Forces occupied the demilitarised

Rhineland. Thus began the territorial seizures of the Nazis in Europe.

**On March 5th, 1946,** speaking at Westminster College in Fulton (Missouri, USA), Winston Churchill uttered the historic words about the 'iron curtain' that divided Europe. This marked the beginning of the Cold War.

**On March 5th, 1996,** Belavia National Airline was established through the reorganisation of the Belarusian Civil Aviation Association. The main regular and charter international flights are operated by Belavia from the Minsk National Airport. The company has 17 representative offices



**On March 7th, 321,** Roman Emperor Constantine I was the first in history to proclaim Sunday a day off. According to the testimony of his contemporaries, in the entire history of the reign of this Emperor, none of his other orders had caused greater joy among the population.



**March 8th** is International Women's Day, established in 1910 by the decision of the Socialist International at the 2nd International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen. It was first celebrated in 1911. The United Nations declared 1975 as the International Year of Women, since then March 8th has been officially proclaimed



as International Women's Day. In modern society, it is, first of all, a spring holiday and commemorates landmark women.

in the CIS and non-CIS states and is a member of the international organisation of air carriers, IATA.

**March 9th** is World DJ Day — the culmination of a week of charitable activities in support of children's organisations held on behalf of the international club industry around the world.

Traditionally, all profits received by DJs, clubs and radio stations on this day are donated to various international children's funds and institutions.



**On March 10th, 1946,** Vladimir Gostyukhin was born, an actor and People's Artist of Belarus (1996). He starred in the films *Ascent*, *Coast*, *Time Chose Us*, *I'll Take Your Pain*, *Urga*, etc. He is a winner of the Lenin Komsomol Prize of Belarus (1980), state prizes of Belarus (1982), the USSR (1985) and Russia (1993).



At the international film festivals in Italy (San Remo) and Yugoslavia, he won the prize for 'Best Actor'. Furthermore, he is also a laureate of the 'For Spiritual Revival' Award (2002), the special prize of the President of the Republic of Belarus 'For the Preservation and Development of Spirituality Traditions in Cinematography' (2006) and the prize of the Union State in the field of literature and art (2007).