

Attractive ice continent

Belarus keen to continue research in the Antarctic

By Olga Belova

“The scale of future studies depends on financing, deciding whether we’ll simply have a scientific presence or take part more actively, including via independent expeditions,” explains the Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Mikhail Myasnikovich. The state programme — *Monitoring the Polar Regions of the Earth and Supporting the Activity of Arctic and Antarctic Expeditions from 2011-2015* — envisaged the possibility of conducting new scientific studies on the ice continent but it’s yet to be decided whether Belarusian polar researchers shall go to the Antarctic this year. The issue is being studied by the Government; according to Mr. Myasnikovich, ‘the issue is not yet finally settled’.

It seems likely that Belarusian polar researchers won’t join the



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Belarusian polar researchers ever ready to conduct scientific studies on the ice continent

Russian Antarctic expedition at the initial stage of travelling to the Antarctic on the ‘Academician Fedorov’ ship but may join their Russian colleagues in Cape Town, jointly reaching the Antarctic on an Il-76 plane. Negotiations are underway.

It was previously expected that Russia would give the Vechern-

yaya Mountain field camp to Belarus (where Belarusian specialists have worked in recent years). Talks have taken place, with an inter-governmental Belarusian-Russian agreement on co-operation in the Antarctic leading the way, but arrangements are yet to be finalised.

If Belarus plans to become a

consultative party within the Antarctic Treaty and participate in decision making regarding vital issues relating to the continent, it must continue its scientific-research work there. At present, the southern continent of the Earth is a zone for science and research, with mining of mineral deposits prohibited but, in a

few decades’ time, the ice continent may be divided for profit. Being rich in mineral resources, including hydrocarbons and uranium, it has great value. The leading states of the globe expand their research here. At present, 48 countries have joined the Antarctic Treaty, with 29 acting as consultative parties.

Bobruisk’s milestone shows direction to remote Tel-Aviv

By Pavel Mitrokhin

Bobruisk residents can from time to time be allowed to remind everyone about their love of their native city. Moreover, they do this with humour — natural for those living in a city on the Berezina River

A recently appeared sign at the crossroads of two streets in the city — Proletarskaya and Pushkin — shows the distances to important places around the world. It reads that 7,267km separate Bobruisk from New York and 1,080km to Berlin. However, on approaching the sign, there are those who might be embarrassed with the choice of geographical names. Alongside the world capitals, it also refers to the small village of Pleshchenitsy, in the Logoisk district. In fact, Bobruisk’s residents have made this unusual choice



Milestone popular among Bobruisk residents

deliberately to pay tribute to a proverb which is popular in the city: ‘Belarus has three capitals — Minsk, Bobruisk and Pleshchenitsy’. The addition of the

village to the sign has pleased many locals.

The author of the idea and major initiator of the project is the Director of Bobruisk’s Vo-

dokanal (water supply operator), Oleg Titov. He wished to make a lasting gift to his city and the idea has been a great success. “Of course, Bobruisk is not the top city in the country. It’s not the second as well,” he says, but it’s difficult to guess whether he speaks seriously or in jest. According to Mr. Titov, a milestone is a reminder to Bobruisk residents about their friends and relatives who’ve left the city. Anyone could approach the sign, look at the distance to Tel-Aviv written on it and realise that their friends are not too far away.

It seems the milestone will soon be as popular among Bobruisk residents, as the monument to the beaver is. The latter has been installed in the city centre fairly recently, but already attracts residents and guests who wish to touch its nose or a chain of its watch, in the belief that this will bring good luck.

Artistic project focuses on future mothers

Classical music concerts for pregnant women organised in Vitebsk

Vitebsk’s Regional Philharmonic is currently preparing a new project — unique for Belarus. From November, it is hosting special concerts for future mothers, explains Artistic Leader Nelli Matsaberidze. The repertoire has been chosen jointly with doctors, based on scientific research regarding the favourable influence of certain compositions on pregnant women and their

unborn children. The future mothers will even be taught to sing lullabies. Saturday meetings at the Philharmonic will be attended by psychologists, paediatricians, gynaecologists and other healthcare specialists, ready to offer advice where needed.

Similar projects have already proven popular worldwide, with music by Beethoven, Mozart, Vivaldi and Tchaikovsky considered most positively influential on those who are pregnant.

Researchers explore historical facts

By Darya Levitina

Archaeologists find remains of ancient Viking settlement in Vitebsk region

Olga Levko, Doctor of Historical Sciences, who heads the Pre-Industrial History Centre at Belarus’ NAS History Institute, tells us that fragments of weapons and household utensils have been unearthed during digs. These prove that Vikings lived permanently on Belarusian territory rather than being transient. The most precious finds include non-ferrous metal bullions, a silver scabbard head and a casting mould for the belt head of Viking guards. Moreover, archaeologists have discovered the burial place of a Viking guard, with his armour and horse. “The last discovery is very important to us,” notes Ms. Levko. “It proves that Vikings lived on our territory.”



Ms. Levko stresses that almost no research has been achieved in Belarus dedicated to the Vikings but, soon, scientists plan to investigate, determining how the Vikings lived on Belarusian territory. It’s already known that their settlements were small and were located near those of local residents.

The Vikings were early medieval Scandinavian sailors who raided along the coast from Vinland to Bjarmia and from the Caspian Sea region to North Africa, in the 8th-11th century. There were primarily peasants of Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish origin, who travelled beyond the borders of their native lands in search of profit.

New scientific ideas in free use

By Tatiana Pastukhova

Belarusian scientists’ theses available worldwide

Summarising the results of a report for National Library employees, Galina Karmishenskaya, a representative of ProQuest Company (a universal information resource for science and education), tells us that theses by our scientists will become available all over the globe.

The National Library is a subscriber of ProQuest’s two

largest databases, which include 28 thematic sections, covering technical and humanitarian sciences, medicine, business, management, economy and law, as well as multi-disciplinary theses. “Belarusian scientists will have the opportunity to place their theses in our database, if they meet our criteria,” notes Ms. Karmishenskaya. All library users will be able to access the database via the Internet or can use a programme to review commonly used file types.

Ms. Karmishenskaya notes that the appearance of theses

by Belarusian scientists on the Internet will open up new horizons. The works will become widely-accessible, readable and quoted. Moreover, if an author doesn’t want to place their thesis for free access, they can sell it via the company at beneficial terms.

The National Library, the Presidential Library, the BSU Library and the Academy of Sciences Library are subscribing to ProQuest’s databases, which also ensure access to several hundred others containing information on literature, his-

tory, sociology, bio-engineering, environmental protection and technology. ProQuest representatives are confident that co-operation with Belarusian libraries will expand. “We’re keen to see this, offering special prices to prolong subscription. We’re conducting a very flexible policy: the more users of our databases there are in a country, the cheaper the subscription price,” explains Ms. Karmishenskaya, adding that the National Library is interested in new databases on art and humanitarian sciences.