

# Hotel to be seen on monitor of computer as if in our palm

In the near future, Belarusian hotel bookings will be available online from anywhere in the world

By Victor Anikeenko

From February, any hotel in Minsk, or elsewhere in Belarus, will be available for booking via the Internet, in addition to bookings being taken by phone. All hotels countrywide will be available on a single database (at <http://belarustourism.by>). Simultaneously, a national system of online booking of excursions and tours is being prepared, supervised by the National Tourism Agency. Valery Boldyrev, the Head of Marketing and Publishing Activity Department at the National Tourism Agency, tells us more.

The project should enable Belarusian hotels to work to global booking standards, increasing the country's

popularity. Belarusian hotels will become available to hundreds of thousands of foreign tour-operators and tourists. The scheme has no intermediaries, who require additional time and money. From now on, each hotel can independently register with the database, with potential guests seeing real prices on the monitor of their computer. Accordingly, they can immediately book a room, paying by card, receiving email confirmation of their booking. The Belarusian tourist-information network will thereby join the international database of hotels. People will be able to search the database from their own computers, or mobile phone or from a special terminal (soon to appear at Minsk National Airport,



GEORGE SHABLUIK

## Belarusian hotels ready to follow globally recognised booking standards

railway stations and trading centres).

**If I were a tourist using the online booking service for the first time, what would I do?**

You just need to choose a hotel, viewing available rooms and choosing the one you like. To book, you give your personal data and the number of your card account, so that one night's stay at the hotel can be reserved from your account. You'll be able to pay on arrival but your card gives a guarantee. If you fail to arrive, this amount is deducted by the hotel; the scheme works in most countries.

**Are Belarusian hotels**

**ready for this system?**

Large and small hotels alike are now ready to join the system. However, the first thing they need to do is conform to European terms regarding prices and discounts. Of course, online bookings don't limit a hotel in its distribution of rooms.

**Is the project aimed at foreign tourists?**

Yes. The project primarily focuses on raising incoming tourism. As soon as the number of hotels on the national online booking system reaches 30-40, we'll be able to connect it to global systems, like HotelsPro or Booking.com. This step will allow

Belarusian hotels to access a wider audience. A tourist from New Zealand, for example, will be able to easily book a room at a Minsk hotel, for any day and at any moment. The development of the online booking system is just one stage in establishing of a single tourist-information network, under the aegis of the National Tourism Agency. Visitors to the [belarustourism.by](http://belarustourism.by) website will also be able to book a guide-translator or a tour guide, to accompany them on an excursion or a tour they've chosen. Transport services are also to be available for online booking soon.

# Cross-country vehicle called 'glaidor'

By Anna Bogomazova

**Victor Saverchenko, a postgraduate student from the Heat and Mass Transfer Institute of the National Academy of Sciences, constructs new vehicle able to operate in hard-to-reach places**

The young scientist explains that 'glaidor' (the name of the innovation) is similar to a motor bicycle or a scooter yet weighs considerably less, at around 30kg. It also boasts greater cross-country capability. "The new device is equipped with an aircraft engine and aerodynamic propeller thrust," Mr. Saverchenko tells us. "Accordingly, it can run where neither a motor bicycle nor a scooter can."

'Glaidor' is perfect to use across sand, snow and ice, travelling at up to 80km/h, and its high placed engine allows it to navigate water up to 60cm deep. Its bicycle pedals can be used to move it forward without the engine but the 'glaidor' is rather economical, hardly needing much petrol.

According to the inventor, it's perfect for forestry workers and ecologists wishing to patrol territories, as well as employees of the Emergency Ministry. Moreover, it should prove popular among the first response services, especially in traffic jams.

In the near future, Mr. Saverchenko plans to improve the developed model, and hopes it will become popular. 'Glaidor' has been presented at the Youth Innovation Forum in Minsk and was highly assessed there.



New scientific research of Antarctic lies ahead

# Seasonal work on ice continent

By Veronica Bogomazova

**Belarusian polar researchers study bio-diversity at Progress Antarctic Station**

Belarus' National Centre for Polar Research has announced that Belarusian polar specialists are to continue exploring the Antarctic as part of the Russian Antarctic expedition. They are now heading for the Progress Polar Station, aboard the Academic Fedorov, to conduct new scientific investigations.

Alexey Gaidashev and Yuri Giginyak set off for the Antarctic from Belarus last December, aiming to study the biological diversity of this ice continent. At the Progress Station, they will monitor Antarctic an-

imals: their habits and relation with the environment. Simultaneously, they'll continue studying the Antarctic waters and ice, atmospheric composition and the local ozone layer. Equipment especially developed by Belarusian scientists is to be used for these seasonal experiments — able to work at low temperatures.

The specialists are to appraise the condition of the equipment and life support systems being used at the Vechernyaya Mountain Station (where Belarusian polar expeditions are based). The National Centre for Polar Research tells us that 'work is already done, with results to be announced later'.

The men will return from the Antarctic in late February.

# New software designed to teach Georgian language

High-Tech Park resident Sakrament IT spends several months 'teaching' speech synthesiser for blind Georgian language

By Nikolay Dorofeev

Last spring, Georgia's Union of the Blind held talks in Minsk, after failing to find a software developer ready to fulfil an order for a modest sum of money. However, in autumn, the new software was cheered at its presentation in Tbilisi.

"We've provided the customer with the beta-version, for preliminary acquaintance. This is an almost finished programme which we'll complete in just a few weeks," explains Sakrament IT's founder, Valery Yegorov. "The software envisages such functions as changing text reading speed, the use of intonation, and the possibility of adding



VALERY KHARCHENKO

## Georgian language synthesis software tested

new words to the user dictionary of stresses. The development of our speech synthesiser has been conducted with the participation of specialists from Minsk's State Linguistic University. Previously, we created a similar order for Lithua-

nia; now, we're negotiating with Kazakhstan and Romania."

Interestingly, programmers don't need to know all the nuances of the language — be it Georgian, Lithuanian or another — as they apply compiled synthesis,

using native-speakers as voice donors. Texts pronounced by professional speakers are decomposed by the software into allophones (sound 'bricks' used by the synthesiser to construct voiced words for any printed text existing in an electronic form).

Not only the blind use such synthesisers. The Belarusian IT company is a global leader in the field of software development for the distinguishing and synthesis of Russian and English speech. It is used in information-reference services, alarm, security and screen access systems, in addition to mobile applications (to establish a speech interface).