

Birchwood cannot but please the eye

Republican Ecological Forum, held in Brest, states that ecological security is state priority

By Sergey Kovalev

On the eve of the Forum, participants symbolically visited the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, as this year's event coincides with the International Year of Forests. Belarus' sacred Brest Hero-Fortress also received attention, with a maple avenue planted nearby.

"Sadly, not everyone understands how fragile our home planet Earth truly is; it resembles a crystal ball which might easily be destroyed. The significance of the Ecological Forum can hardly be overestimated," stressed the Chairman of the Brest Regional Executive Committee, Konstantin Sumar. "Attracting public attention to environmental problems, alongside ecological education, is among the most important tasks for our state."

An exhibition entitled *Modern Technologies in the Field of Environmental Protection and Rational Nature Use* was a traditional highlight of the Forum, organised along the central avenue of the City Culture and Recreation Park. The theme of forests continued, with local guesthouses

and tourist sites promoting themselves, while forestry stands were 'planted' with local decorative plants. The park's avenue featured lovely summer houses and wooden lodges produced by the forestries. Meanwhile, hunting forestries showed what they have to offer in the field of tourism and active leisure.

Master classes left no time to be bored, with APB BirdLife Belarus Public Organisation inviting visitors to help build nesting boxes for white wagtails. Guests were able to saw boards, hammering them together and painting their finished houses.

Minsk's ecological gymnasium #19 aroused huge interest, with pupils demonstrating toy making and how to turn old notebooks into postcards. Waste processing enterprises also showcased their innovative developments; the latest scientific achievements and technologies help save natural resources, purifying the water and air.

"The use of modern technologies can considerably reduce our burden on the environment. We need to study them and imple-



Ecological Forum participants plant maple avenue

ment the most useful designs," stresses the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister, Vladimir Tsalko. Fo-

rum participants also visited Brest Waste Processing Plant, which is implementing advanced technologies.

Divers create sensation

Wooden sculpture of pagan deity discovered at bottom of Drissa River in Rossony District

At first, the amateur divers thought they'd found a drowned person. Approaching closer, events unfolded rather as they might in an action film: underwater shootings, examinations by specialists and the raising of the precious exhibit to the surface. Scientists were astonished at the condition of the most ancient rarity, since water has only strengthened the wooden idol over the centuries. Sadly, one section of the pagan deity is burnt, perhaps having been damaged during the advent of Christianity. Fortunately, it was thrown into the water.

"The oak statue is 1.22m high and over 1m wide in its lower section, weighing around 200kg, with eye sockets, mouth and chin clearly distinguishable, making it anthropomorphic," explains Denis Duk, who heads the National and World History Department at Polotsk's State University.

The exhibit has been sent in a special box (wrapped in cellulose packing) to the History Institute at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus for further investigation. Before acquiring a place in the Institute's display, it must be restored and conserved. The statue is thought by some to date from the 12th century. However, Doctor of Historical Sciences Olga Levko, who heads the Pre-Industrial Society History Centre at Belarus' NAS History Institute, disagrees. "Evidently, the sculpture comes from an early period, since paganism was primarily widespread here until only the 10th century," she says.

Another pagan deity was discovered in Belarus in 1963: a 10th century stone idol, found in the Shklov District.

Young patient gains new lease of life after successful operation

Unique liver transplant conducted by Belarusian doctors

By Kristina Kurlovskaya

"A liver transplant has been conducted on 20 month old Liana Buinovets, from Mozyr, who was poisoned by a death-cap mushroom. The operation was unique, as there was no time to examine Liana's mother or father as potential donor; fortunately, a liver from an 8 month old child was available," explains Oleg Rummo, the Director of the Organ and Tissue National Transplantation Centre and the chief supernumerary transplantologist at Belarus' Health Ministry.

So far, only one liver transplant has been carried out within the CIS on someone poisoned by a death-cap: at the Minsk Centre on Yevgeny Smirnov, 16, two years ago. "The poisoning damages the liver and leads to death; it's absolutely impossible to repair the organ, so the only way to save the life of the patient is to replace it," Mr. Rummo tells us.

The operation lasted about ten hours, attracting 20 doctors and nurses. Liana and her mother are now staying at the Cen-



Small patient, with parents and doctors

tre's intensive care department, under doctors' supervision. "We now know that the operation was a success. We've already transplanted 94 livers and have certain experience in the field. The situation is developing as it should. Liana has very good prospects for growing to become a fully-fledged member of our society," asserts Mr. Rummo.

Belarus has already conducted 175 organ transplantations and, according to Mr. Rummo, 250-270 should have been conducted by the end of the year. He notes that about 60 people are on the waiting list for a new liver. "These are the most serious patients, who cannot live long without an operation," the doctor explains.

Joint efforts prove efficient

By Vasily Malakhov

Belarus and Japan praise results of joint RADBEL project

The project aims to modernise the Belarusian state border system, battling illegal trade in nuclear and radioactive materials; as the Charge d'Affaires ad Interim of Japan in Belarus, Kiyoshi Matsuzaki, admits: 'it's been a success.' He believes the project will help strengthen ties between our two countries and is hopeful that similar projects may be implemented in future. Mr. Matsuzaki notes that Belarus and Japan began liaising in matters concerning nuclear non-proliferation and radiation security back in 1994.

The First Deputy Chairman of the State Border Committee of Belarus, Andrei Gorulko, stresses that Belarus' border guard service began co-operating with the Technical Secretariat of the Committee for Co-operation in Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation of Japan in 2009. The joint RADBEL project has allowed the State Border Committee to equip its units with radiation control tools.

Mr. Gorulko remarks that the situation across the border of Belarus and other countries indicates that such projects as RADBEL are timely. This year alone, Belarusian border guards found five attempts to smuggle hazardous radioactive cargo into the country.

'Meeting' on the platform

Original sculpture appears at Vitebsk Railway Station

The bronze sculpture, created by prominent masters Azat Torosyan and Alexander Gvozdkov, is poignantly named 'The Meeting' — truly appropriate for a railway station. It symbolises human relations and anticipation, the ties of relatives, faith and, even, the realisation of dreams. Naturally, the venue sees friends and lovers meeting daily, alongside complete strangers.

Vitebsk Railway Station has been a place of parting and meeting for over 150 years; who knows how

many destinies have been united there. It's difficult to calculate, but we can certainly say that each person who stands near the wrought iron bench beside 'The Meeting' has their own hopes and recollections — their own wishes which excite the heart and soul. Standing alongside one another next to the sculpture, even silent strangers can feel their shared emotions, as they listen out for the remote rattle of carriage wheels. Long-awaited meetings remain as important today as they ever have done, regardless of time or location.