

Capital tries on bright festive dress

Minsk always smartens up well for festive occasions and City Day is no exception

By Ivan Ivanovsky

A decade ago, the history of this holiday began. Recently, the capital again marked its City Day. It's such a beautiful event. Although the summer has passed, the streets become crowded again with promenaders, while the trees yet retain their colour. Visitors to the Belarusian capital enviously admire its green avenues, which almost appear like groves, its shaded courtyards, and lush public gardens and parks.

Festivities took place not just in the city's green areas but outside the National Library of Belarus for two days this year; those from the National Academy of Sciences invited guests to view the latest scientific innovations, while over 75 famous Minsk brands gathered together — a rare sight. Visitors were able to see powerful MAZ vehicles and tractors and Amkodor universal machinery, while trying Motovelo bicycles, mopeds and motorbikes. Meanwhile, young people spent eleven hours taking part in various contests and shows at Minsk-Arena — the country's major sports ground.

Around 60 events — concerts, exhibitions, trade fairs, contests and sports competitions — were enjoyed by Minsk residents and guests, with the celebrations launched at Minsk —

Hero-City Monument in Pobediteley Avenue, where flowers were laid in remembrance.

Of course, musical entertainment was everywhere. Several concert grounds were set up in Pobedy Park, on the bank of Lake Komsomolskoe, with folk groups playing. The Holiday of Street Music was organised in the Lower Town, near the Troitsky Suburbs, while the 'Minsker of the Year' awards were solemnly bestowed at the Musical Theatre in the evening, followed by the premiere of *Blue Cameo*. The State Academic Symphony Orchestra, conducted by maestro Alexander Anisimov, opened its new season at the Philharmonic Society, with admirers of classical music listening to Gustav Mahler's Symphony #2.

City Day saw some new projects, such as Minsk's *Art Parlour* exhibition, which invited people to the public garden near the Town Hall to gain acquaintance with writers and illustrators. Residents were invited to take books home for the 'Become a Reader!' book exchange campaign, asked to later return them to the nearest library. The sweet Holiday of Honey was also in evidence, as were craftsmen, each displaying their talents. The wonderful event concluded with a stunning musical firework display over Lake Komsomolskoe.



Festive mood reigns on City Day

Major crossroads for international relations

By Alina Grishkevich

Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov heads Belarus' governmental delegation at 66th session of UN General Assembly, as it opens at New York headquarters

The primary objective of the Belarusian delegation will be to promote foreign political initiatives dealing with: human trafficking; the creation of effective international mechanisms to raise the accessibility of technologies; the promotion of new and renewable energy sources for developing countries and transitional economies; the raising of the wellbeing of future generations; and the strengthening of international support for states with medium levels of income.

There are almost 170 issues on the agenda, with the mitigation of the consequences of the global financial and economic crisis taking a leading position. Measures to improve the international financial system must be agreed. The strengthening of the UN's role in preventing and handling armed conflicts endangering international peace and security is another priority. Moreover, preparations for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (to be held in Rio de Janeiro next year) will be agreed, as will events to be held as part of the 2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All.

The UN General Assembly session will include thematic meetings — such as the Nuclear Security Summit and the Conference on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Upon Belarus' initiative, the second Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking will be held.

Books as great and eternal art

Moscow International Book Fair proves true parade of best printed editions, with Belarusian stand occupying considerable place

By Larisa Rakovskaya

Belarus has won the Grand Prix at the 8th International *Art of Book Contest*, for its *Radziwills: 18th-19th Century Album of Portraits* (Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House). It has already received the 'For Spiritual Revival' award in Belarus and proved interesting to Moscow's historians and bibliophiles.

The Moscow International Book Fair is a traditional venue for the discussion of joint plans, as Lilia Ananich, Belarus' First Deputy Information Minister, notes. She explains that Belarus and Moscow have agreed to jointly fund some new editions describing the historical, cultural and literary interaction of Belarus and Russia.

Visiting the opening of the Belarusian stand, Sergey Stepashin, Chairman of the Russian Accounts Chamber, held some weighty volumes



Opening of Belarusian exposition in Moscow

in his hands (in all senses of the word — as some albums weighed up to 5kg), promising to promote the work of Belarusian publishers to a wider audience.

Dmitry Strukov. Album of Drawings. 1864-1867 details the work of the famous Moscow researcher, created while on expedition through the North-West of Belarus in the mid-19th century. The collection shows the architecture and way of life of Be-

larus from that time, and was prepared for printing back in the 19th century but failed to be published. Many enthusiasts — including Moscow art experts, Vilnius museum employees and, of course, workers from the Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House — have worked hard to bring the edition to life, with full-colour pictures on true watercolour paper.

The exhibition's major accent was to give a long-term

forecast of the future of publishing. Representatives from one of the most successful Russian publishing houses — Eksmo — were present, stressing that book sales in Russia continue to fall. It's thought that the market may soon fall by another 5-10 percent: the same as was observed in 2010, when sales fell by over 8 percent. One segment of the book market remains healthy: that dealing with training and education. However, electronic display boards, which are becoming widespread through the school system, could threaten the future of textbook publishing.

Anyone who would dare to call themselves civilised is surely a regular reader of course. Ozon — the largest bookstore on the Russian Internet — sold 3.3m books, worth \$1bn Russian Roubles, in the first eight months of this year, up 37 percent on 2010.

Interesting solution

Vitebsk's new residential suburb courtyards to be named in honour of region's districts

Deputies have suggested naming the courtyards of Vitebsk's new residential suburbs. "It would be nice if the regional centre acquired a 'Miory courtyard', or a 'Verkhnedvinsk courtyard,'" notes Nikolay Smunev, Chairman of the Vitebsk City Council.

The presidium of the Regional Council and heads of district councils of deputies have supported the initiative, offering to set up a 'Vitebsk courtyard' in each district centre. The project is part of a major programme to improve courtyards in the regional centre, envisaging a whole range of works. In particular, asphalt concrete areas and pavements are to be repaired.

Programmers to simplify tourists' lives

Online tourist navigation service to take form of interactive map comprising several thousand tourism related sites

To find a nearby hotel, restaurant or museum, travellers need to access the Internet via their laptop or smartphone, specifying their location. The system then generates all the necessary information and finds the fastest route to the site. Additionally, tourists can plan their routes before-

hand, even booking accommodation online in advance, a restaurant table or a tour guide.

Two new registries are planned, covering tourist infrastructure and tour routes, using data from Belarus' State Cadastre of Tourism Resources (numbering about 20,000 sites). "We need to sort cadastre data, making it available to those keen on holidaying in Belarus," explains Vyacheslav Chernov, the National Tourism Agency Director.