

Heaven thunders over Ashuluk

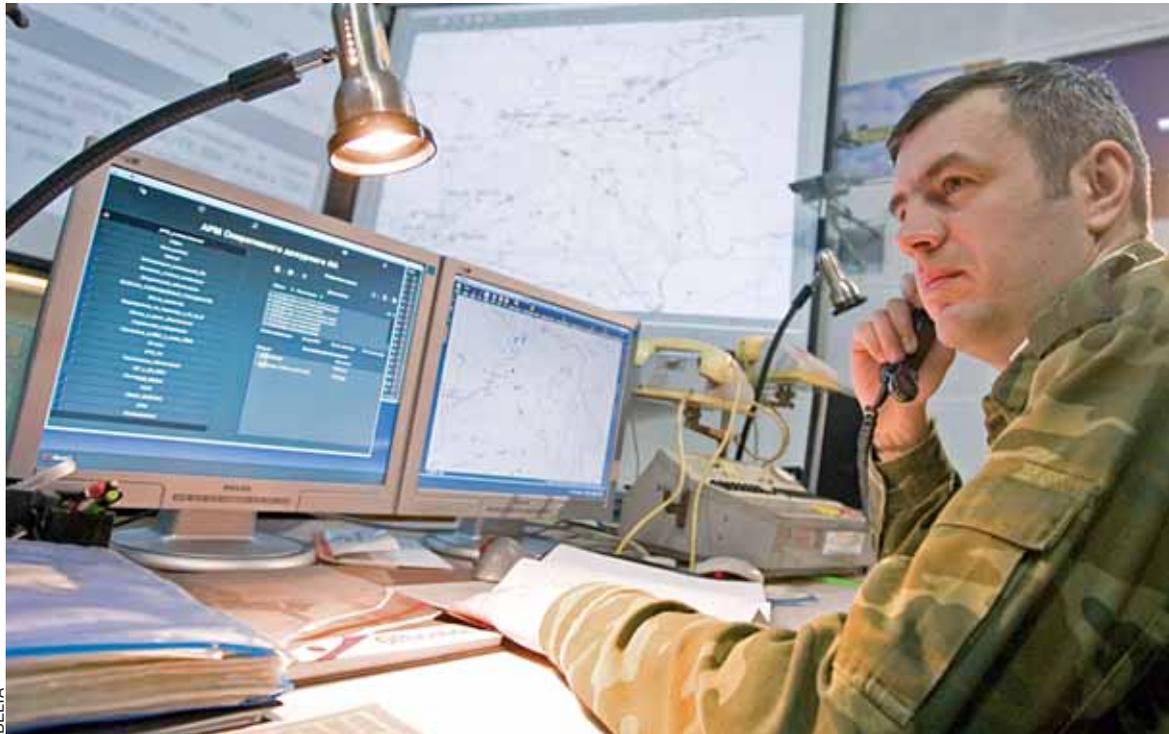
Russian training grounds of Gorokhovetsky and Ashuluk host *Union Shield-2011* joint operational exercises of armed forces of Belarus and Russia

By Alexander Makoveev

Undoubtedly, the scale of the joint exercises was impressive, involving around 12,000 of the military and up to 200 military vehicles (including 100 tanks), alongside 50 planes and helicopters.

On the eve of the exercises, General Mayor Piotr Tikhonovsky, Chief of the Armed Forces' General Staff and Belarus' First Deputy Defence Minister, emphasised that *Union Shield-2011* was exclusively of defensive character. This was proven by the combat play on Gorokhovetsky training ground, where troops of the Western Operative Command of the Armed Forces of Belarus worked closely with the 20th Army of the Russian Western Military District to battle their rival. Using a flexible defence plan and efficient application of artillery and aviation, as well as pilotless aircraft, the allies defeated the enemy.

Belarus' Defence Minister, General-Lieutenant Yuri Zhadobin, notes that Belarusian and Russian troops acted as a single unit. General-Colonel Arkady Bakhin, the Commander of the Western Military District of the Russian Armed Forces, agrees, stressing that the major accent of the exercises was the control and interaction of troops.



Command point for aviation military management

The soldiers demonstrated good combat skills and preparedness.

During the second stage of the exercises, the efficiency of the single regional air defence system of our two states regarding air attacks was scrutinised. Combat units of air defence missile formations fulfilled live fire exercises at Ashuluk training ground, using S-300, 'Buk' and

'Osa' systems.

The strategies used in solving the complex tasks were truly impressive, with air defence missile formations facing the latest 'Bekas' and 'Saman' target-missiles, imitating the movement of precision-guided weapons. The Commander of the Russian Air Force's 185th Centre for Military Training and Deployment, Gen-

eral-Major Vladimir Gradusov, explained, "We don't want to use targets which have no relation to reality and don't imitate what we'd expect in a real situation."

No one observing could doubt that the *Union Shield-2011* joint exercises will positively influence the efficiency of the armed forces of our two states.

Heading to Biberach for knowledge and extensive experience

Grodno State University students to train at University of Applied Sciences in Germany

By Lilia Novikova

The University of Applied Sciences in German Biberach — one of the most revered European universities for training engineers and architects — is to accept five students and two Master's degree candidates from Grodno State University free of charge. A delegation from the German university, headed by Rector Thomas Vogel, recently visited GSU, offering the invitation.

The two higher educational establishments have maintained close contacts for several years, especially with our construction department. "We're keen to send our trainee engineers and architects to the University of Biberach," explains Yevgeny Rovba, Rector of Grodno State University. "Our partner focuses on practical experience for students, giving each undergraduate six months internship with a

construction company. Students independently find construction firms, offering their own ideas and further implementing them. A report is prepared after the working semester is over. In addition, any diploma, Bachelor's or Master's degree paper envisages a definite project, which should be obligatory realised."

Belarusian universities are becoming more focused on offering their students practical experience via internships, as being promoted by Belarus' Education Minister, Sergei Maskevich. Grodno students will benefit vastly from studying the experience of their German colleagues, as generously offered. During the visit to Grodno, the Rector of Biberach University, Thomas Vogel, joined Prof. Jörg Hauptmann in giving lectures to students. Such exchanges of teachers have become part of co-operation between our two higher educational establishments.

Leisure exports enjoy particular success



Belarusian spas enjoy great popularity among foreigners

By Oksana Shutkova

From January to September 2011, 137,000 foreigners stayed at Belarusian spas

The Director of the Republican Centre for Recuperation and Sanatorium-Resort Treatment, Nikolay Mazur, has announced the latest figures, noting that around 200,000 foreigners will have stayed at our sanatorium and resort sites by the end of the year.

The export of such services has been developing in the Republic for the last three years, with Belarusian spas proving popular for their quality and value for money.

In 2010, 173,000 people from

the CIS and beyond chose to rest and recuperate in Belarus — 5,000 more than in 2009. Of these, 95 percent were residents of Russia and the Baltic States. Mr. Mazur stresses that Israeli residents are also arriving, via charter flights, while some German residents have attended Belarusian spas 15 times.

He notes that each foreigner spends, on average, around \$1,000 in Belarus: \$500 for their stay and another \$500 on excursions, souvenirs and other goods. He is convinced that foreigners are attracted by the tranquillity and security of staying in Belarus, the good quality of local cuisine, the high level of medical assistance and beautiful natural surroundings.

Business no obstacle to culture

By Yelena Stasyukova

Grodno to host festival of Indian culture for the first time

The decision was made at a meeting between Grodno City Executive Committee officials and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Manoj Kumar Bharti, who was in Grodno for a two-day visit. The Ambassador and his wife toured the city's places of interest and visited several companies at Grodnoinvest FEZ.

The diplomat also met Grodno City Executive Committee officials and local businessmen to discuss prospects for co-operation between Grodno and India, focusing on trade and economic collaboration, investment projects financed by Indian capital and possible joint ventures. The Indian diplomat showed keen interest in the city's food and pharmaceutical industries.

The Ambassador invited Grodno officials to present the city's investment potential at a meeting with an Indian delegation in Minsk in September; it comprised the heads of major manufacturing and construction companies and transport and logistics firms.

Cultural links were also discussed, with Grodno to host a festival of Indian culture in October, featuring Indian films, dancing and music.

Open access to innovative technologies

By Diana Kurilo

Polotsk becomes first Belarusian city to join Covenant of Mayors

The declaration on Polotsk's joining was signed in German Friedrichshafen, with the solemn ceremony attended by the mayors of Friedrichshafen and Spanish Murcia, in addition to members of the public and media. Polotsk is now the first Belarusian city to take on the obligations of the EU's '20-20-20' strategy. This aims to reduce CO2 emissions by 20 percent, while expanding the application of alternative energy sources by 20 percent and raising energy efficiency by 20 percent by 2020. Membership gives Polotsk access to European innovative energy saving technologies, while expanding its sci-tech potential and establishing partner ties with other participating cities.

The realisation of Polotsk's sustainable energy development plan is to become the first stage of the *Sustainable Urban Energy in the Region of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument — towards the Covenant of Mayors* project. The plan has been developed jointly by international experts from Spanish Bionet and the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences' Energy Institute.