

# Young people solemnly granted their civil status

On eve of Constitution Day, hundreds of 16 year olds receive their first passports



Minsk pupils awarded passports as citizens of Belarus during patriotic event dedicated to Constitution Day

By Galina Anufrieva

Parliamentarians invited some of the hardest working pupils from Minsk schools and gymnasiums to attend the National Assembly's House of Representatives for a solemn ceremony of being given their passports, congratulating them on becoming fully-fledged citizens of the state.

Naturally, the youngsters felt a little anxious, but the parliamentarians welcomed them warmly and encouraged them. The Deputy Chair of the House

of Representatives' Standing Committee for Health-Care, Physical Culture,

**These young people are looking to the future with confidence and are proud to be taking their first steps in their native country**

Family and Youth Matters, Svetlana Shilova, told them, "It's an honour to have a Belarusian passport."

Each of the young citizens has already achieved a great deal. For example, Alexander Lamchanovsky, a pupil of gymnasium #29,

has taken part in numerous Olympiads and contests, winning prizes. He

plans to make a career of the fascinating science of astronomy, speaking enthusiastically of lectures at the planetarium. He often travels to the countryside with his teacher to observe the night sky via telescope. New technology is ever im-

proving our ability to learn about celestial bodies and, no doubt, the gifted boy will one day work with the most contemporary equipment. He is planning to apply to the country's major university, the BSU, which has its Aerospace Education Centre. Alexander hopes to benefit his country and society with his endeavours.

16 year old Anna Zaprutskaya 'feels quite at home' with languages, already speaking fluent Russian and Belarusian — the two state languages. Of

course, she still has much to learn and believes that all the country's universities are open to her. She is also keen to study ecology. "Maybe, I'll enter the International State Ecology University (named after Sakharov). There's so much of interest in the world, and I'd like my profession to be useful to society. You make choices now which affect your whole life," she notes.

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## Historical interpretation of glorious life of region

Rare book department at Grodno Regional Library (named after Karsky) keeps around 500 editions

By Yelena Stasova

A hall of rare editions opened at the Local History Department a year ago, holding 500 unique books from the 19th-early 20th century: in Russian, Polish, English, German and French.

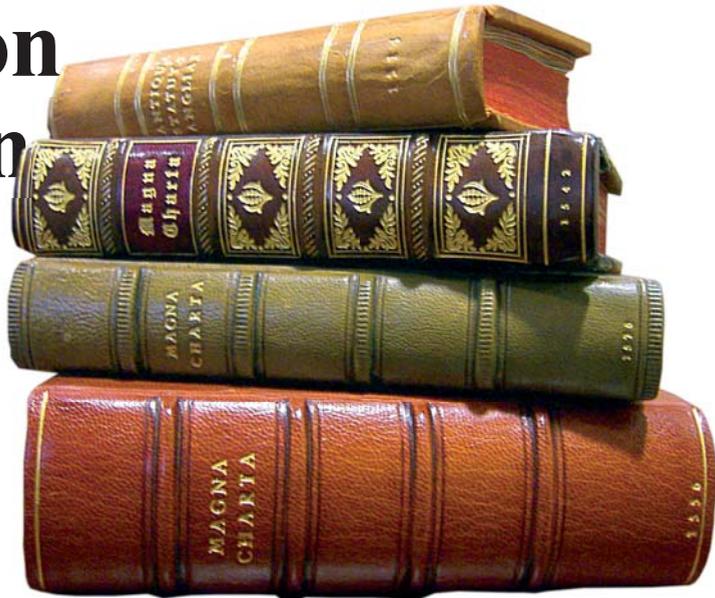
It boasts the most complete collection of *Reviews of Grodno Province* (1878-1913), which details the life and activity of the province in general and its districts in particular. The edition presents information on the region — gathered over each year: demographic,

administrative-legal and economic. It even assesses improvements to medical services. For instance, the books tell us that, in 1878, there were only 63 doctors in the Grodno Province, compared to 205 in 1913.

Materials from the first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897 relating to the Grodno Province (St. Petersburg, 1904) are another precious acquisition. According to the edition, the residents of the province named Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Gypsy

and, even, Finnish as their native language.

Another book is by famous Grodno historian, *Grodnienskie Gubernskie Vedomosti* (Grodno Provincial News) journalist Vladimir Manasein: *Peasant Issues in the Grodno Province in the 19th Century* (1902). This analyses the legislation regarding serfdom and the attitude of landowners and peasants. Another edition regards education in the Grodno Region in the late 19th century: *A Short Report on the Condition of*



*Grodno Men's Gymnasium from 1881-1892, Compiled by Teacher G. Kharlampovich* (1893).

The Grodno Regional Scientific Library (named after Karsky) is Belarus' oldest library, having opened in 1830. At first, its books were largely donated by the city's nobility — serv-

ing state officials, the nobility and landowners. In the 1950s, the library opened to the wider public and now boasts over 640,000 editions (books, magazines, newspapers, printed music and electronic documents in 37 languages). Annually, around 50,000 readers use the library service.

## Propitious day for family life

By Tatiana Yevgenieva

**Over the last 16 years, none of the couples married at Minsk's Wedding Palace on February 29th have divorced**

Leap year, let alone February 29th, isn't considered very lucky for marriage. However, those who aren't superstitious seem to have chosen a propitious date.

"This year, we didn't have a single wedding ceremony on February 29th," notes Nadezhda Reutskaya, the Head of Minsk's Wedding Palace. "However, this is probably because we don't usually organise ceremonies on Wednesdays or Tuesdays — although we can make an exception, of course. If a foreigner's visa is expiring and they need a particular date, we do our best to accommodate them. Most people aren't eager to marry early in the week. Even St. Valentine's Day saw no weddings — perhaps because it fell on Tuesday this year. We've analysed data from four leap years — 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 — and, amazingly, have found that no one married at our Wedding Palace on February 29th has yet divorced."

Of course, the most important factor in marriage is who you marry, not when!

## A true bird sensation

**Long-eared owl recently found nesting in Minsk park**

The nesting of a long-eared owl in urban Belarus is so rare that ornithologists doubted the fact until the last moment. According to APB-BirdLife Belarus (public association), in the second half of January, owls were hatching while street temperatures hit minus 30 Celcius. Even now, the weather is hardly warm. Alongside severe frosts, the hatchlings have been vulnerable to ravens, hawks and cats.

Baby owls were born several months earlier in the year, so their appearance is a true miracle. Volunteers are monitoring the nest to ensure the safety of the young birds.

According to Ruslan Shaikin, a specialist with APB-BirdLife Belarus Public Association, such cases have been observed in Russia but this is the first in Europe. Our changing climate may be responsible for the anomaly, as various natural processes are being disturbed.