

# Olympic athletes receive parting words

166 Belarusian sportsmen to battle for medals at London Olympiad, with a goal of at least 25

By Denis Kruglov

There was a time when a state's image was determined by its size and military power; now, its achievements in various spheres are held up for critique — including those in the sporting arena. Belarus has much to be proud of, having taken two dozen medals in Beijing four years ago. Our state is currently ranked among the top twenty for its Olympic success, so we justly hope for new victories in London.

There is more of impor-

tance than personal sporting success. Speaking to the Belarusian Olympic team, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, who heads the National Olympic Committee, noted, "In London, you'll be primarily fighting for the prestige of our country, which is measured in medals. Sport is the highest level of diplomacy. Triumph transforms a country in the eyes of the world community, forming a positive image. It is a demonstration of the successful development of the wider country."

This year, 166 Belarusian athletes will be fighting for Olympic medals, with a goal of at least 25 — including five gold. Every sixth athlete is hoped to mount the podium, despite conditions of severe competition. They must push themselves to breaking point. The President asserted that the Olympic Games are different to other sporting events, saying, "Athletes train and collect all their reserves but only victory truly matters. Participation is good but victory is more important than mere participation."



Alexander Lukashenko and member of Olympic national team Victoria Azarenko

This is my instruction to you, on behalf of the Belarusian nation."

Of course, the Belarusian team is filled with prominent athletes, each ready for the task ahead.

Traditionally, we are strong in weightlifting and track and field, as well as rowing. The Games in London will be the sixth for Yekaterina Karsten, the captain of the Belarusian squad, who has won medals at all her previous Olympiads, including gold. Tennis player Victoria Azarenko (currently ranked first seed) will be playing mixed doubles with Max Mirny, who are sure to delight fans. Ivan Tikhon, Nadezhda Ostapchuk, Anastasia Novikova and others also have a major chance of winning medals. For the first time, our Belarusian footballers are taking part and are the only post-Soviet national team to reach this year's Olympic Games.

Mr. Lukashenko handed a state flag to Ms. Karsten while Max Mirny is taking

the banner for the Belarusian team at the London Olympiad opening (seeded first among men's doubles). The Head of State gave the athletes state awards for high professional mastery and outstanding sporting achievements, with Victoria Azarenko given the honour of the Fatherland Order of the Third Degree. In turn, she presented her racket to the Belarusian President. Several other athletes have been awarded the title of Honoured Coach of Belarus and Honoured Master of Sports of Belarus.

After meeting the President, the Olympic national team set off to Minsk's Victory Square to honour the memory of those who died during the Great Patriotic War, laying a wreath at the Eternal Flame.



Belarusian Olympic athletes lay wreath at Victory Monument in Minsk

## Russian Emergency Ministry keen on Belarusian developments

Russia's Emergency Minister, Vladimir Puchkov, notes that Belarusian developments in the sphere of rescue and salvage are arousing interest

"Russian specialists and experts are attentively studying the best Belarusian technological innovations in the sphere of rescue and salvage operations, fire fighting and the mitigation of radiation pollution, for use by the Russian Emergency Ministry," explains the Minister. He adds that he has already instructed particular structures to study Belarusian methods. "Achievements by our Belarusian colleagues are arousing our serious interest. We'll make a study and then decide either to establish joint production or to buy equipment for the Russian Emergency Ministry."

Mr. Puchkov headed a Russian delegation to Minsk, negotiating with the leadership of the Belarusian Emergency Ministry.

## Talents and gifts revealed in youth



Belarus' experience and achievements in supporting talented youngsters presented at UN as part of major session of Economic and Social Council

The UN Headquarters recently hosted the *Assisting Youth Participation: Supporting Young Talents* round table discussion. The event was initiated and chaired by Belarus, with support from Australia, Russia and Turkey. The head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry's Main Department for Multilateral Diplomacy, Yuri Ambrazev-

ich, was deputy head of the Belarusian delegation at the ECOSOC main session. He presented Belarus' experience and achievements regarding the state support of talented youngsters and noted that this forms the foundation of a system of working with young Belarusians. He called upon UN organisations to tackle youth issues more actively, to encourage youngsters in helping solve global issues of sustainable development.

Representatives of UNESCO, UNFPA,

UNICEF, the UNDP and the Alliance of Civilisation took part, with representatives from all over the world sharing experience of youth issues. Belarus' proposal to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination of such efforts (by states and UN agencies) was agreed.

Participants came to the conclusion that joint efforts by member states and UN agencies in supporting talented youngsters need to be extended.

This is to be reflected in a youth policy resolution presented at the UN General Assembly in 2013, as well as on the UN development agenda for the period after 2015.

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