

Tramidators gain status

Igor Danin and his colleagues work as tramidators: standing in queues for others in return for payment. Of course, such work was popular during times of food shortage, when queuing at shops was essential, but how relevant are they today?

By Mikhail Denisenkov

It's Monday morning and the summer heat has returned after a fortnight break, much to the dismay of those waiting to apply for visas at a foreign consulate. "Today, the queue isn't very big, so it should only take around five hours," explains Igor. Various people use his services, including middle-aged women who would rather pay money than queue themselves.

Several youngsters assist Igor, whose agency is officially registered for tax. He launched it a year ago as, at the time, there were problems with foreign currency, with queues at embassies and currency exchange offices.

The administration of one of Minsk's districts initially thought the application was a joke. On accepting his story, they were unsure of which type of activity to classify him under. Now, Igor's agency isn't the only one in Minsk to offer such services; competition has appeared to help those needing to queue at embassies, consulates and state road inspections.

"Once, I stood in a queue at the State Road Inspection from 3am until 1pm. I was desperate to sleep and will long remember that night. I've even queued for a swimming pool but that only took 90 minutes," recalls Igor.

Minsk tramidators charge Br23,000 per hour on average (around \$3), with the price rising



While queues exist, there will be demand for tramidators' services

to Br30,000 in winter. The greatest demand for such services is seen in autumn. "Those who plan to travel in spring tend to apply for visas in autumn, while those going abroad in summer apply in winter," explains Igor.

Meanwhile, our queue is moving. Heavy sighs are heard in front of us and behind, although tension is de-

fused by the cheerful voices of those queuing for payment. Of course, it can be very dull to stand queuing, so it's common for those waiting to play games on their mobile phones, read or, even, watch films. However, conflicts can occur.

"There was a case recently when one tramidator was occupying places in a queue for several peo-

ple," Igor tells me. "When all the customers arrived, the man standing behind the tramidator began to express his dissatisfaction, refusing to allow them ahead. Of course, he'd never heard of tramidators or of such agencies. I had to bring out the necessary documents of certification and tax declaration. Most people treat such situations calmly

though, even expressing respect for students earning money in this way, saving the time of busy people."

Within a few hours, Igor calls his customer, and they appear within 40 minutes, allowing him to leave. Igor receives his fee while the satisfied customer receives the pleasure of not having had to spend several hours queuing!

Great prospects for formerly unpromising land

Khimy village, being revived in Orsha District, auditions future residents

By Olga Bogomazova

The surrounding countryside is amazing; the beautiful Dnieper River carries its rapid waters past steep banks and a green strip of forest in the distance. Children's voices are heard in the village of new, gold-coloured log cottages. Doors wide-open, there is a local post office, Uliyanka shop, a comprehensive reception centre and a sports ground.

Khimy is located on the border of the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions, and boasts an interesting history of curious events. To reach Khimy from neighbouring Kopys (Orsha District), you should pass through the Mogilev Region, so that you can admire the wonderful infrastructure of famous Alexandria. It was here that the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, grew up; you can see the school where he studied and the desk at which he sat.

The village had become almost empty until recently, with just a dozen people living there permanently, although there were 40 cottages. The decision to revive it was taken around two years ago. Now, most of the empty houses have been bought as summer homes.

Within a short period of time, 15 new cottages appeared in Khimy; now, 45 people reside there, having arrived from the Vitebsk Region, and elsewhere — even from the Russian Federation. The Stanovye family are from Vorkuta, while Yelena Rusakevich is from Baran; she is a medical assistant at the village's first-aid station, and has moved in with her three children. According to Vladimir Dedushkin, the Chairman of the Orsha District Executive Committee, he often answers phone calls from Russia and, even, Kazakhstan, from people wishing to move in.



Own hospital with children's doctors in Khimy

"In line with the general plan, our builders are constructing 60 houses in total," he explains. "We're also developing an industrial base, alongside social infrastructure, to ensure employment. A branch of the Sweet Country Factory, manufacturing biscuits, is to open near Khimy, close to neighbouring Lipki; work is already underway on the design and estimates. There will also be a factory processing duck meat, providing jobs. This year, we plan to open a new kindergarten for 25 children, encouraging young families to move in and work here. Probably, in future, we'll also acquire our own House of Culture and a fitness

centre. Khimy residents are unlikely to feel the lack of such services, as neighbouring Alexandria (just 2-3km away) has great facilities, including a large, contemporary swimming pool."

Many are calling the project in the Orsha District innovative, since the entire village is really being built from scratch; sometimes, building something new requires fewer resources than restoring the old. We can be assured that Khimy will become a contemporary settlement, fully viable and employing its residents productively. A once small and unpromising village now has grand prospects.

Animal consultations for price of ticket

Grodno Zoo to advise on care of exotic animals

The new consultation service is connected with the fact that Grodno residents are acquiring exotic animals more often as pets, yet often lack the knowledge with which to properly care for them. Rare turtles, snakes, lizards, polecats and other such animals are often presented at the zoo, with exotic reptiles among the most commonly owned. Every day, one or two owners of exotic animals seek the help of zoo experts.

Advice on housing, feeding and care of animals is given for the simple cost of entry to the zoo, since it is keen to ensure pets are well looked after; correct feeding is especially important to avoid harming animals' health.

Grodno Zoo is the oldest in Belarus and was reconstructed in 2002, doubling its size, with most buildings renovated to create special facilities: for large animals, those requiring particular climates, wolves, lynxes, birds of prey, pheasants and peacocks. There is even an elephant enclosure with swimming pool and heated flooring. Over 3,000 animals of 303 species currently reside at Grodno Zoo.