

# Legacy of the past popular with investors and tourists

New phenomena of private-public partnership to protect historical and cultural legacy

The state treasury is financing the restoration of several ancient monuments, with help from patrons of arts. There is even a 'division of labour'. Major projects are financed from the country's budget: 38 ancient fortresses and their ruins are included on the 2012-2018 *Castles of Belarus* programme, approved by the Council of Ministers. Meanwhile, there are some enthusiastic individuals and institutions eager to restore former noble manors, helping Belarusian heritage rise from the ashes.

## Renaissance 300 years on

The *Castles of Belarus* programme was inspired primarily by Novogrudok Castle, whose condition had long raised fears among enthusiasts. A list of sites countrywide needing attention has now been compiled, explains architect and restorer Sergey Drushchits, who is heading restoration at Novogrudok Castle. He has just finished working in Nesvizh, where he supervised the return of the Radziwill residence to its former glory.

Novogrudok Castle is already a hive of activity, with work starting on Kostelnaya Tower (which looks rather like a Catholic church). The semi-ruined walls, which sit on a steep slope with a drop of 24m, are in critical condition. Since Swedish troops destroyed Novogrudok Castle in 1706, nothing has been restored. Its second tower is Shchitovka, which is to be com-

pletely restored, with a museum exhibition being housed on all four floors. Half of the tower fell down in the early 20th century so photos are proving invaluable. Last year, digs began, with the remains of 13th century buildings discovered at a depth of 7m; a further two towers (previously 'hidden' under earth and turf) were also unearthed.

In 2013, specialists will begin to conserve ruined Krevo Castle, which is connected with three grand dukes of Lithuania: Keštutis, Jagiełło and Vytautas. According to Igor Chernyavsky, the Head of the Culture Ministry's Department for Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage, Knyazheskaya Tower may also be restored.

## Ancient residences can't yet cope with guests

In line with the *Castles of Belarus* programme, Golshany Castle and that in Bykhov are being restored. In 2013, Bykhov will be hosting the Day of Belarusian Written Language, so investors are already taking interest in its castle. Mir Castle was among the first to receive attention, alongside Nesvizh Palace; the latter's park and wider estate are now being returned to their original beauty. Lida Castle is also undergoing reconstruction.

**The popularity of historical sites is ever growing among tourists, with 190,000 visiting Mir Castle from January to August 2012. More visitors than ever before hail from Poland, Lithuania, Russia, France, Holland, Spain, China and Brazil.**

tion, with plans afoot to restore the castle in Grodno.

The popularity of tourist sites is ever rising. From January to August 2012, Mir Castle hosted 190,000 visitors, proving most popular. It was restored in line with documental

sources and analogues from the late 16th-early 17th century. The Portrait Hall is the second most loved room, followed by the apartments of Duke Mikhail Svyatopolk-Mirsky — the last owner of the castle. Close behind are the castle's library, study and dining room.

Nesvizh Castle is thinking of introducing a limit on its number of visitors, as the site is proving rather too busy for guides (and local accommodation) to cope with. Belarus' Deputy Culture Minister, Tadeush Struzhetsky, tells us that, in 2010, 135,000 tourists visited the Radziwill's former home; this rose to 170,000 in 2011 and, from January-September 2012, over 300,000 guests were recorded. He notes, "Such numbers are bringing organisational problems." Clearly, Nesvizh is demonstrating unprecedented popularity, which is a good indicator for the success of other sites.



## Banks safeguard more than money

By Yevgeny Semiletov

Belarus has begun to create a national DNA bank, notes the Director of the Institute for Genetics and Cytology at the National Academy of Sciences

The Doctor of Biological Sciences explains that specially refrigerated units and ultra-deep freezers can store DNA samples for years. Staff have already collected several thousand genetic samples.

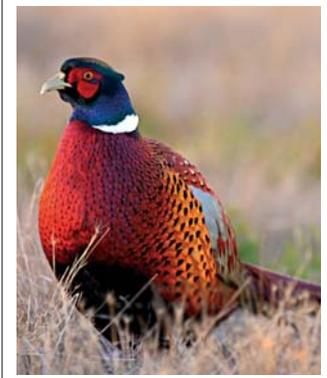
According to the director, the creation of the national DNA bank will aid research into micro molecular genetics and selection, since people's genetic aptitude to various diseases can be determined: heart disease, diabetes, bronchial asthma, lardaceous kidneys and mutations leading to sensorineural hearing loss. The data can also be used to study individual human response to drugs. Additionally, the bank is to hold DNA from animals, plants and micro-organisms.

## Royal style pheasant shooting

Grodno Region to offer pheasant hunting — as in ancient times

Grodno Meat Factory has rented about five thousand hectares of land in the Bershtovsky forest district of Skidelsky forestry, to organise commercial hunting tours.

Meanwhile, Porechanka Farm is breeding pheasants. It was joined to the Meat Factory due to its unprofitability a few years ago and



has converted into the first commercial pheasant yard in the country, now turning a profit. Further avenues for development are under consideration, with a target of 15,000 birds set (currently 5,500).

Orders for 'royal' hunting in the forests of the Grodno Region have already been received not only from Belarusians but from Russians.



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