Sail rushes into the sky

The tallest building in the Belarusian capital now rises 133 metres. Known as the Parus (Sail), it's located at the crossing of three of Minsk's busiest streets: Timiryazev, Kalvariyskaya and Maxim Tank. Five minutes by lift takes you to the 30th floor but the final four floors are still only accessible on foot The steps are rather icy but the builders only laugh, as they are used to climbing precarious structures. They originally traversed 15 floors without a lift, carrying tools and construction materials, in worse weather.

By Olga Pasiyak

Along the way, we explore the layout; by 2013, residents will be moving into some of the 204 apartments. Their area ranges from 61 square metres to 179, with one to four rooms and two-level penthouses on the upper floors, with access to an open terrace. The views are amazing, revealing the city in its full glory. So far, only 40 apartments have been sold but property developers are confident that the 'ready to move into' homes will prove popular. Only a small part of the first floor is to be set aside for commercial outlets, with about 40 percent already sold. Spacious parking for 250 cars is also planned.

Unlike another skyscraper whose construction is to begin a little closer to the centre in spring, the Parus is designed as living accommodation rather than office space. Together, they form an ultra-modern urban ensemble which is sure to add some flavour to Minsk, asserts Vladimir Alexandrovich, the Director General of the developing company. He tells us, "By next April, the first skyscraper in Belarus will also be the first residential building to have a glass façade. It will serve as a sun screen in summer and reduce heat loss in winter. Being Belarus' first such building, construction workers have reinforced the structure 3-4 fold more than usually required, to cover themselves; no code exists for such designs."

Over $50m is being invested, with developers emphasising that only advantages are evident — including new jobs and higher standards of housing. Although skyscrapers are generally considered to be over 150m tall, while the Parus is just 133m, anything over 30 floors is usually designated within the category. Of course, Minsk's low level skyline and modest population negates the need for skyscrapers on a par with those in the United Arab Emirates.

On New Year's Eve, fireworks will be launched from the roof of the Sail, giving a view from further afield. Incidentally, Minsk already has a building called the Parus Business Centre, on Melezh Street, but it has only 16 floors. The developers joke, "The more sails we have, the further we'll sail."

ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Parus skyscraper is tallest in Belarus

Calculator prototype from bygone age on show

Gomel residents gain unique opportunity to see first calculating machine, invented 370 years ago

The arithmometer, made in 1642, was brought to the city on the River Sozh by the staff of the Henri Lecoq Natural History Museum in French Clermont-Ferrand. Gomel residents have enjoyed twin-city relations since 1977 with Clermont-Ferrand, which is the birthplace of the famous scientist, mathematician, physicist, writer and philosopher Blaise Pascal.

The inventor wrote the fundamental rule of hydrostatics, upon which our brake systems, presses and other hydraulic devices are based, and created the first arithmometers, calculators and the prototypes of today's digital adding machines. Blaise Pascal — considered to be one of the greatest minds of the 17th century — designed his first device aged 19, wanting to simplify the work of his father, who was a tax collector. Today, his inventions still attract great interest although, initially, they had only narrow application.

Two of Pascal's nine arithmometers are owned by the Henri Lecoq Museum. Curator Nathalie Vidal and Deputy Director Dominique Vogt brought one precious example hundreds of kilometres to Belarus, so that Gomel residents might touch the historical invention. They are also giving lectures at the city's educational institutions.

During the past 35 years of twin city relations, nearly twenty of the best students from Gomel gymnasium # 46, where French language is studied to an advanced level, have had the chance to spend two weeks at a school in Clermont-Ferrand.

Scientists have great plans

From November 14-27th, New Delhi will be hosting the India International Trade Fair-2012, with Belarus acting as a partner state, presenting over 130 sci-tech developments

More active collaboration between Belarusian and Indian scientists is planned, including exploration of molecular structure, and the electro-physical and dialectric properties of non-composite layers and their application as gas sensors. The project is to involve representatives of Gomel's State University (named after Skorina) and the Hindustan College of Science and Technology.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Heat and Mass Transfer at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus is to work with the Indian Institute of Science in developing BOS technique to diagnose hypersonic streams. In addition, the Physical-Technical Institute at the NAS of Belarus and the Indian Institute of Technology are implementing a project relating to ion-beam nitrogenation and laser processing of protective coverings for corrosion-resistant steels.

BELTA

Belarusian scientists' works are known in India

Belarus is presenting over 130 high-tech innovative developments at the exhibition in the form of site-collected samples, map boards, multi-media presentations and advertising materials. The State Science and Technology Committee stand is involving 12 institutions of the Education Ministry and five scientific and scientific production organisations of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

The forum covers all priority areas of sci-tech activity in Belarus: power engineering and energy saving; rational nature management; resource saving and renewable energy sources; chemical technologies; nano-technologies and biotechnologies; agro-industrial technologies and manufactures; medicine and pharmacy; information and communication technologies; new materials; and defence potential and national security.

Belarus' participation in the 32nd India International Trade Fair will promote co-operation between Belarusian and Indian scientists. A memorandum on mutual understanding is to be signed in New Delhi, between the State Science and Technology Committee and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy — regarding co-operation in the sphere of renewable energy sources.

New service offered

Belavia to allow check-in via mobile phone

Belavia is working to allow check-in for its flights from mobile devices, as announced via its twitter page. From November, it launched a new system of online registration, enabling passengers to check-in online, choosing their seats. The system doesn't yet work with mobile devices so the drawback is to be removed in 2013.

Online registration is permissible up to 22 hours before departure and ends three hours beforehand. However, passengers for charter flights, those requiring special services, official passengers and those travelling in groups of more than nine still need to present themselves at registration desks. Online check-in is available online for scheduled flights departing from Minsk, Baku, Batumi, Gomel, Grodno, Yekaterinburg, Yerevan, Kaliningrad, Milan, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Prague, Rome, St. Petersburg, Tbilisi and Frankfurt.

Idea of time schedule

About sixty electronic information boards to be installed at bus stops across Minsk next year

Electronic boards are currently being trialled throughout the capital, with transport workers receiving positive reviews. The Director General of Minsktrans, Victor Tozik, tells us that the boards save money, since traditional printed schedules are no longer needed at stops, and are proving far more convenient, as they allow passengers to be notified of delays immediately. "New technologies are helping us to improve our level of service," emphasises Mr. Tozik.

Where buses and trolley buses are late due to traffic jams, the boards can be used to signal delay, avoiding unnecessary passenger frustration. The city boasts nearly 2,000 stops, with the electronic boards being installed at the busiest. Separate traffic lanes for public transport would also help improve our service, allowing buses to travel at steady speeds.