

Pleasant thoughts of fitting salaries

A recently study across dozens of countries has shown citizens' satisfaction with various aspects of life. Economic growth does not automatically guarantee greater happiness, despite creating more employment and raising incomes. However, knowledge of earning more than your neighbour does seem to be a factor in people's contentment.

By Vladimir Khromov

After last year's economic shocks, most Belarusians view the fall in their salary (in foreign currency equivalent) in comparison with most neighbouring countries as the worst outcome — rather than inflation or higher rates for loans. The fact that higher salaries are available over our borders has inspired many to seek work abroad.

The question of raising salaries is being addressed, with the Government aiming to ensure an average salary of \$500 (in equivalent) by the end of the year; in some

places, this milestone has been already overcome. According to the National Statistical Committee, September saw average salaries reach \$484. Naturally, regional differences are in evidence, with more industrially developed areas offering higher salaries and the capital offering the highest wages of all.

The National Statistical Committee recorded an average monthly salary of \$611 (in equivalent) in Minsk this August: almost two and a half times less than in Moscow (\$1,376) and more than one and a half times less than in Astana (\$1,004). Kiev residents

earn almost the same as Minsk residents: \$572. However, some other CIS capitals receive salaries of almost half this amount. In August, residents of Chisinau earned just \$354 (in equivalent). Those in Yerevan took home an average of \$320 a month while Bishkek residents earned \$302 and Tajikistan's Dushanbe saw the lowest CIS capital income — a meagre \$231.

Unsurprisingly, average nominal salaries in CIS capitals exceed those in rural areas and in provincial towns. However, the difference in such incomes varies greatly between countries. Minsk residents earned nearly a quarter

more than workers in Belarusian regions this August, compared to Moscow residents earning 73 percent more than Russian regional residents. Kiev workers earned half as much again as the Ukrainian average while those in Astana took home salaries which were 44 percent above the national average. The wider population of Kyrgyzstan received 33 percent less, on average, than those working in Bishkek while Moldovans earned 26 percent less than Chisinau residents. The smallest gap was seen in Armenia, where Yerevan salaries were a modest 9.5 percent higher. The greatest differentiation in the

CIS was observed among the lowest-paid workers — in Tajikistan. Dushanbe workers received an average of 114 percent more than those employed in the regions.

Another interesting indicator is growth in spending power. The CIS Statistical Committee believes that this has risen a significant 32 percent in Belarus. From August 2011 to 2012, the consumer price index saw real salaries rise as follows: in Azerbaijan — 9.8 percent, Armenia — 2.7 percent, Kazakhstan — 7 percent, Kyrgyzstan — 9 percent, Moldova — 6 percent, Russia — 6 percent, Tajikistan — 18 percent, and Ukraine — 14 percent.



Citizens' purchasing power is best reflection of standard of living

Theatre life restoration

Polish theatre historian presents book about Grodno theatre, in Minsk

Zbigniew Jedrychowski's *Grodno Theatres of 1784-1864* has been presented at the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. He explores theatrical life in Grodno, including rare materials from archives and libraries across Poland, Belarus, Russia and Lithuania.

"The book details 80 Grodno province theatrical seasons. At first the theatre was in Polish language and then shifted to the Russian language. Its puppet theatre is currently under restoration. Contemporary theatre tends to focus a great deal on sets and lighting when, really, the dialogue should speak for itself," asserts theatre historian and candidate of human sciences Zbigniew Jedrychowski. The book presentation was followed by an exhibition entitled *History of Belarusian Theatrical Life*, prepared by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department. Over 100 written and printed documents from the 18th-19th century were on show, from libraries, dedicated to stage art. Some of the exhibits still bear their original seals and notes in the margins, written by well-known people.

Burial mounds disclose their ancient, mysterious secrets

A recent archaeological dig near Mogilev has unearthed a pendant in the form of an encircled cross, a silver temporal ring and beads made from Byzantine glass — all worn by noble women from the Krivichi tribe in the 10th-11th century. The pendant-cross indicates that the wearer was a Christian, making it the earliest Christian burial hill discovered in the Mogilev Region to date.

By Mikhail Pimenov

Igor Marzalyuk, who heads the Mogilev State University's Department for Archaeology and Special Disciplines, invited me to visit the site, allowing me a rare chance to touch little studied historical pages. Just 10km from Mogilev, we turn onto a forest track which would be delightfully picturesque but for the excessive mud which threatens to entrap us. Mr. Marzalyuk explains that, in 1941, Fascist troops were shot there, with remains of German uniforms still being discovered. At last, the path through the forest ends and we approach a village, crossing a bridge over a stream on the other side before climbing a hill. Stopping, we view a group of over ten apparently untouched burial mounds. In fact, during the 1812 war, the French dug into the top of them to install guns for shelling General



Igor Marzalyuk: 'Further discoveries lie ahead'

Raevsky's headquarters.

A strong old oak grows on one — almost 500 years old. Mr. Mar-

zalyuk notes that the Slavs cherished such giants in pagan times and everything possible is being



done to preserve the tree during next year's digs on the site.

A small hole is visible at the centre of one mound: where the burial was made. The remains of a wooden bucket found beside the legs of the buried woman probably once contained honey. In addition, there is evidence of a large fire which must have accompanied the burial ceremony. The identity of the noble woman remains a mystery but she was probably the wife or daughter of a rich kinsman. Mr. Marzalyuk believes she may have been related to Mogilev's hypothetical founder, Mogila.

Of course, the findings are priceless, showing the move from paganism to Christianity, as well as defining the borders of the Krivichi's re-settlement in the Mogilev Region. The unique artefacts will join those of the Mogilev State University's archaeological laboratory.