



Braslav lakes long-term visiting card of Belarus, which is rich in waterways

Rich water dimension

Water is an abundant treasure in Belarus, unlike elsewhere, but rational use remains essential

Our wealth

Is Belarus rich in water reserves? The departmental head overseeing levels of air pollution and water resources (of the Belarusian Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection), Mr. Zaviyalov, admits that per capita access to water in Belarus equals that of the average European (5,800 cubic metres) while exceeding that of Poland or Ukraine (just 1,700 cubic metres). The Vitebsk and Grodno regions enjoy the most abundant water resources, with the Brest and Gomel region having the lowest levels.

Belarus' surface water comprises

20,800 rivers, around 10,800 lakes, and over 1,500 ponds and reservoirs. The Dnieper, Zapadnaya Dvina, Niemnan, Zapadny Bug, Pripyat, Berezina and Sozh are the largest rivers, while the Naroch, Osveiskoe, Chervonoe, Lukomskoe and Drivyaty are the largest lakes.

Belarus also has great volumes of underground water, including healing springs: there are 235 mineral water wells, with 124 used by spas and water bottling facilities and over 80 used by sanatoriums.

Ability to share

Many countries are experienc-

ing a deficiency in clean drinking water and the situation is unlikely to improve, asserts PR departmental head Victor Radivinovsky, of the UN Representation to Belarus. He notes that water resources are essential to life on Earth, yet 85 percent of global waste water is not cleaned before discharge, polluting sources. Pure drinking water reserves are falling and, over the past few decades, prices have risen accordingly.

The question arises whether Belarus can share its rich reserves of water. Andrey Kovtukho, the General Director of the Belarusian Scientific-Research Geological Ex-

ploration Institute, stresses, "Belarus has a great deal of underground water. Consumption of bottled drinking water is increasing annually, with over 30 facilities involved in the process. As regards exports, only one Belarusian company sells bottled water abroad: to Lithuania."

Our closest neighbours have their own water resources, while high transportation costs make it unprofitable to sell water abroad. Israel has to desalinate sea water but Belarus is unable to export there at a profit. Nevertheless, Mr. Kovtukho believes that our 'blue wealth' could yet generate income. Nineteen un-

derground water reserves have been prepared and are seeking investors, to allow Belarusian mineral water to be sold in Europe. As Mr. Kovtukho admits, a water pipe to those countries in need is not the solution, since quality could not be maintained.

Modern technology envisions bottling directly at source, without preparation, to preserve natural water quality. Having provided such drinking water to its citizens, Belarus could become a life-giving source for other states, which have failed to protect their vital resource in due time.

Alexander Pimenov

Council of Europe confirms status of protected area

By Valentina Kozlovich

Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers extends Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park's European Diploma for Protected Areas for further five years

Relevant documents are already on their way from Strasbourg to confirm the prestigious award, which recognises the successes of national parks and nature protection reserves. Of course, such awards also support Belarus' image as a preserver of eco-systems (the status was first received in 1997, then suspended in 2007). There are no direct financial benefits but indirect benefits are

manifold.

To qualify, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection was obliged to submit a park management plan to the Council of Europe's Committee for Activities in the Field of Biological and Landscape Diversity. Despite application in 2012, it has taken some time for all the recommendations given by the Council to be applied successfully.

Vasily Arnolbik, the Deputy Director General for Science, believes that the Council is now seeing positive trends in the Pushcha. He explains, "We've assessed each area and zoned them according to function. The reserve zone has



Aurochs in Belovezhskaya Pushcha

almost doubled — from 30,000 to 57,000 hectares — and protected areas are now marked. The international experts have praised our environmental work, our new infrastructure and our direction of tourism development."

Belarus' recent joining of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Conven-

tion) may also have played a role, as this is a serious step towards pan-European standards of nature protection.

At present, the National Park is one of the most titled among protected natural sites in Belarus and in Europe. In 1992, UNESCO registered part of the Pushcha on its World Heritage List and, a year later, it became a biosphere reserve.

Estates revived through centuries

By Piotr Simonenko

Mir Castle presents edition on Korelich District estates

Famous Belarusian historian Anatoly Fedoruk's *Ancient Estates of Belarus. The Korelich District* details monuments of the past. Its beautiful photography celebrates the history of 57 estates and was commissioned and funded by the Mir Castle Complex Museum.

"The book pays special attention to the history and grounds of Mir Castle, while tracing its connection with various ancient families. Our museum is a leading source of information on the Korelich District, so we're trying to expand our influence beyond the borders of the castle," explains Olga Popko, Director of the Mir Castle Museum Complex and a candidate of history.

Learning through play

Senior pupils from Minsk schools and gymnasiums to play 'Financial Football'

The National Bank aims to promote older school children's financial literacy by playing a simple 'Financial Football' game. The rules are simple: to pass to

your own players, you need to correctly answer a question on financial matters: personal budget management, efficient credit use and other banking services. The levels range from easy to difficult and should encourage youngsters to learn, in pursuit of 'goals'.