

Looking into ecological future

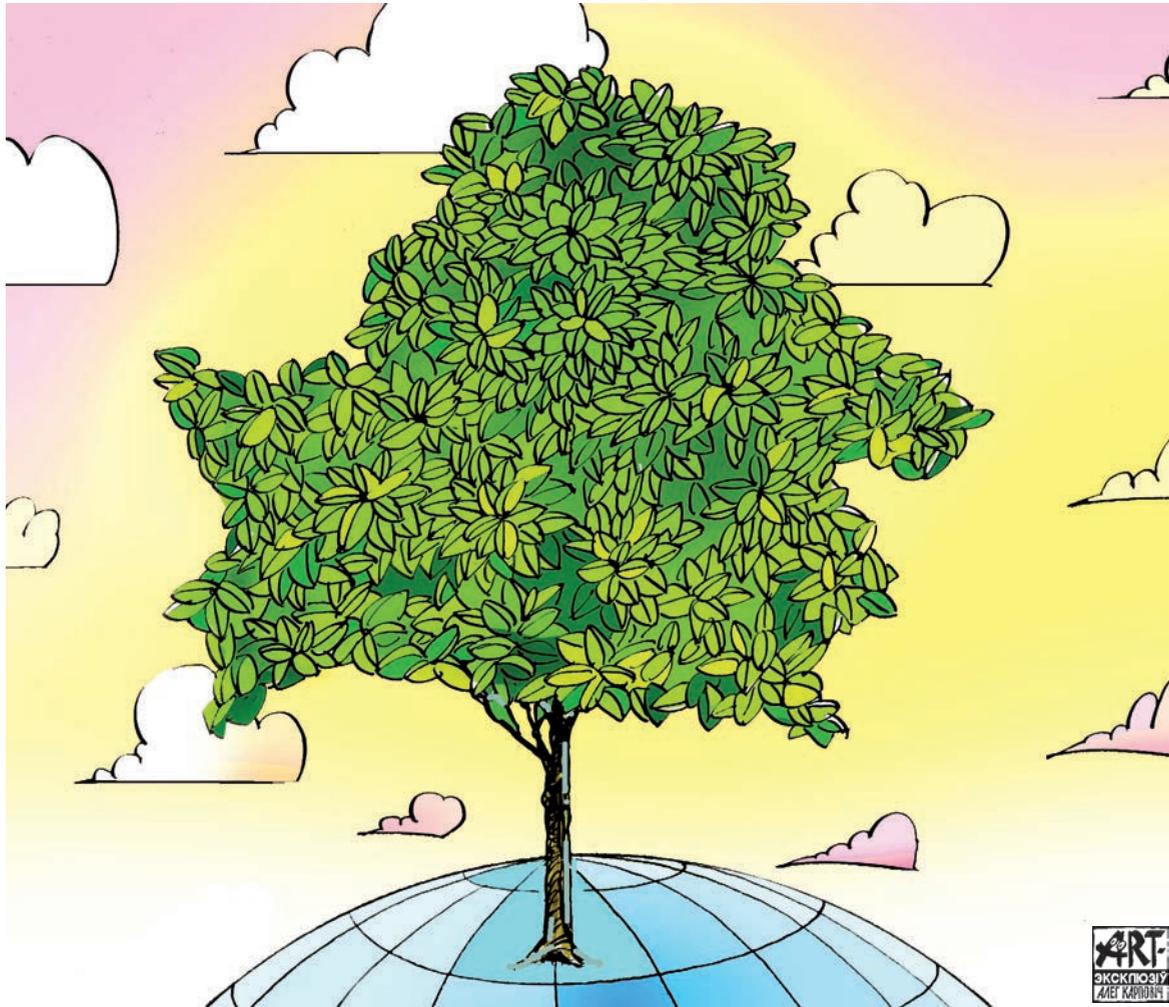
Joint international 'green economy' projects favourably influence environment

By Yuri Chernyakevich

Belarus' ecological situation echoes that of Europe, necessitating waste recycling, the use of renewable energy sources and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. Each state finds its own path, while working with its neighbours and international organisations and, of course, we should all be ready to share our expertise to the benefit of all. The UN is one vehicle of this movement, with five eco-projects being realised in the Republic at present, thanks to funding of \$13m. Meanwhile, another five are planned — worth \$20m.

Most funds are allocated for projects which have undergone successful testing in other countries. Separate waste collection is long established in Europe and the USA, with the Germans and French already in the habit of dividing their plastic and glass waste. Belarusians are yet to accept this as the norm but campaigns are underway to encourage such behaviour.

According to the UN Resident Co-ordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, Sanaka Samarasinha, joint work involves co-operation with local authorities, to set up separate waste collection. Two projects are now being realised with UN financial support:



Tree of 'green' economy has taken roots in Belarus, yielding ecological fruit

in Kobrin and Mosty.

In addition, joint renewable energy projects (solar, water and wind power) are being developed, with wind turbines soon

to launch near Novogrudok. Mr. Samarasinha believes that such technologies will help attract additional investment into Belarus. Of course, Belarus has done

much independently of the UN also, as the First Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Vitaly Kulik, emphasises. He notes that the

Republic has cut its carbon emissions almost three-fold over the past two decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union reduced industrial manufacturing but modern, eco-friendly technologies have also played their role. Many Belarusian factories now recycle their own waste water, which is ecologically friendly and saves money in the long run. Over the past decade, fresh water extraction volumes have halved as a result.

The state now aims to join efforts with the UN in further reducing harmful emissions, helped by building energy efficient housing. This year, two such sites are to launch in Minsk and one in Grodno, consuming less energy during construction and use. These, and other eco-friendly projects, are part of a nationwide campaign to educate Belarusians on environmental protection and energy saving. UN eco-schools have opened in some regions of the Republic, giving children lessons in their local flora and fauna as part of their school curriculum, and organising eco-activities, such as collecting litter from places of natural beauty: forests and the banks of lakes and rivers. Mr. Samarasinha is convinced that young people can only benefit from learning more about nature. In shaping their 'ecological' outlook, the future should be safer in their hands.

Pilgrims prepare for trip

By Galina Litovtseva

In early July, Belarus celebrates the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the miraculous icon of the Mother of God in Budslav

The Head of the Minsk-Mogilev archdiocese, Metropolitan Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, has told journalists that preparations for the spiritual celebration began three years ago. The state is providing significant assistance for Belarusian Catholics, as does the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, and the National Bank has prepared a commemorative coin for the Budslav celebrations. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation is issuing a souvenir sheet called '400th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Miraculous Icon of the Mother of God in Budslav'.

Collectors will be interested to know that, on July 6th, a jubilee stamp is being issued immediately after holy mass in Budslav, conducted by the papal legate, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran: the event is the first of its kind. Cardinal Tauran is very influential in the Catholic world, heading the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

The prelude to the celebrations in Budslav will be a pilgrimage of believers to the shrine, organised



Budslav relic honoured by believers from various countries

from all over the country. Archbishop Kondrusiewicz explains, "Pilgrims are already getting ready for the journey." Several thousand, including those from Poland, Ukraine, Romania and Italy are joining the event. Typically, up to 30,000 people take part in the annual festival in Budslav but, this year, 45,000 or more are likely.

Tatiana Khmel, of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, tells us that a special committee headed by the Chairman of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Boris Batura, is overseeing organisation. Funds have been allocated for landscaping around the church and for its renovation, with special stations of drinking wa-

ter arranged along the pilgrimage route, as well as luggage lockers, militia and doctors.

Each pilgrim will be given a copy of the image of the Mother of God of Budslav. "The upcoming celebration will help us to reflect on the Christian soul of the Belarusian people," emphasises Metropolitan Kondrusiewicz. "Our beautiful Belarus will become even more beautiful in this way." His feeling is supported by the Prior of Budslav Catholic Church, Father Victor Burlaka, who notes, "The image of the Mother of God in Budslav has accepted prayers for 400 years; it has seen our ancestors' tears, their joy, their hope and their faith."

Catching the wind

By Olga Avdeeva

Vladimir Konarev sailing own yacht from Vitebsk to Helsinki

Vladimir caught the taste of the sea at the age of 12, having bought a magazine called *Cutters and Yachts*. While making his first model, he dreamed of taking a real journey and later joined a club. His friend Gary Stepanov, who also builds boats and yachts, established the Sessinkay Sports Club for yachting, windsurfing and kite-boarding, and the pair were soon aboard a raft to Riga, sailing the River Dvina.

"At first, I wanted to go to St. Petersburg but there were too

many technicalities to navigate, so I've settled on a cruise around EU waters, where they're more used to yachtsmen," explains Vladimir. "I've gained a visa from the Latvian Consulate very quickly, and have let the Estonian and Finnish border guards know my intentions."

Vladimir built his 5m long sailing and motor yacht 'Virgo-2' over a period of eight months, basing it on an American Stiven-son. Just 1.8m in width, it weighs about 400kg.

His 25 day trip will cover about 2,000km, taking in such cities as Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki, sailing most of the day and night.

Cyclist provision

Minsk cycle path map and parking being launched

Like most European cities, Minsk is seeing a cycle boom. Accordingly, plans are underway to increase the number and length of cycle paths, to ensure safety and encourage people to enjoy the air. The first such paths opened in 2009, in the districts of Tsentralny, Partizansky and Leninsky. Specially designed 'cycle parking' is also needed, to which bikes can be safely chained. Minsk also plans to launch bike rental, which is

sure to prove popular in summer months. Paths are to be laid and marked on a cyclists' map, taking them around the forest-park zones of the capital.

According to the Head of Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism, on Minsk's City Executive Committee, Alexey Prokopovich, the new cycle map should be ready by August, taking cyclists past shops and other useful facilities, as well as sites of interest. Bicycle rental will operate along each route, allowing pick up and return at various points.