

Mere seconds to buy a ticket

Belarusian Railways to introduce smart card payment for city lines

Belarusian Railways recently presented a mock-up of the new system at the *Transport and Logistics* exhibition in Minsk. Automated payment and ticket issue is being developed, using self-service terminals, across city and regional economy class lines. Currently, such machines are operational at just two stations: Minsk-Passazhirsky and Vitebsk. Tickets are issued within seconds, helping passenger flow. Their success is leading to more such terminals being installed in other towns across Belarus.

Belarusian Railways intends to introduce a system whereby each passenger entering the network is registered electronically, allowing the organisation to keep track of trends and route use.

All novelties — in digital format

Raketa cinema opens after renovation

The cinema first opened in 1958 but has recently enjoyed its first full refurbishment, gaining the latest digital equipment in its 250-seater hall. It boasted a seamless screen and new sound system for the premiere of *Three Musketeers*: a new screen version of the novel by Alexandre Dumas. Actor and producer Sergey Zhigunov has made his director's debut with the work. The new *Cinemascope* season will start in Raketa with a retrospective of films by Roman Polansky, in the small hall, which seats 45.

Searching bowels of the Earth

17th session of Intergovernmental CIS Council discusses geological exploration of our planet, how to protect it and the training needed to ensure sustainability and safety

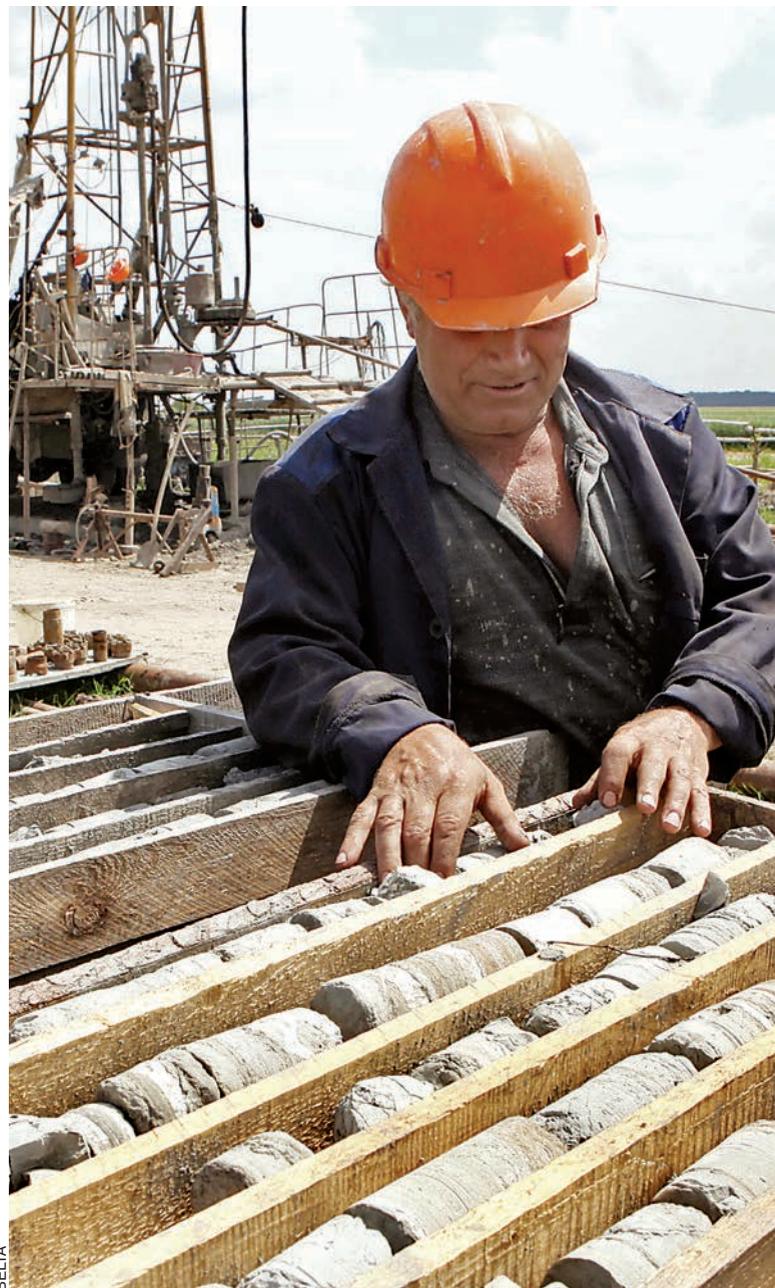
By Yelena Petrova

How deep will today's geologists dig in search of deposits? The Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, Vladimir Tsalko, notes that such countries as Russia and Kazakhstan are developing impressive new techniques of extraction, seeking hydrocarbon raw materials at great depths. He explains, "Our geologists are also digging deeper in search of oil deposits: down to 3km. However, new technologies are ever allowing us to probe deeper. Over the past two years, 6km drilling has been achieved, resulting in new finds of hydrocarbon deposits. Belarus is interested in using technologies tested in Kazakhstan and Russia, since it's an expensive field in which to experiment."

Mr. Tsalko is keen to liaise with Russia in training geologists, as discussed at the recent Inter-

governmental CIS Council meeting in Minsk. Kazakhstan and Tatarstan are planning to create specialised schools for the study of geology, ensuring that expertise is sustained and built upon. Naturally, our CIS countries co-operate in many areas, including making forecast-geochemical maps of the borders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The Adviser to the Chairman of the State Service of Geology and Mineral Resources of Ukraine, Mikhail Geichenko, tells us that several promising deposits of amber, copper and molybdenum have been found near Ukraine's border, similar to those found in Belarus. Diamonds may even yet be discovered. "We don't yet know how far the deposits stretch but we'll never know without co-operating," Mr. Geichenko emphasises.

The Head of Geology at Belarus' Ministry for Natural Resources and Environmental Pro-



Geologists quite often search for oil to a depth of 6km underground

tection, Vladimir Varaksa, admits that Russian offers of joint geodynamic monitoring have aroused our interest; in particular, JSC Belaruskali is keen to liaise.

The Intergovernmental Council session included discussion of new methods of exploration of the Arctic Ocean floor, as well

as prospects for joint hydro-geodynamic monitoring. Plenipotentiary representatives of geological services and experts from Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Moldova and Ukraine took part, alongside representatives of the Executive Committee of the CIS.

Equine elegance and beauty

Four day international exhibition of fifty pedigreed horses brings equine beauty and grace, strength and stamina for admiration in the capital, showing the work of leading Belarusian and foreign breeders of Arabian, Shire, Friesian, and Belarusian Roadster horses (the latter a unique breed raised in our country), alongside ponies and many other breeds

By Irina Savelieva

Obviously, the event took a great deal of organisation, requiring a suitable venue and the solution of various logistical issues, including transportation. A temporary riding house was almost built for the exhibition, explains Alena Moroz, who breeds Arabian thoroughbreds and has worked with horses since childhood. She tells us, "This is the fourth exhibition we've attended in Belarus and has been the best so far in all respects, including provision of safety measures: vital with such big animals. There was a continuous stream of horses performing in wonderful shows; it was fantastic."

Alena chose to breed Arabian thoroughbreds due to her belief that

none other 'equals in beauty or intelligence'. She thinks them close to dogs in their mental abilities and calls the breed 'unique, trainable, and quickly attached to whoever works with them'.

Legendary shirehorse Harley, the tallest in Europe at 197cm (at the crest) stole the show but American miniature horses, at under one metre, also drew much attention — especially as they have never visited Belarus before. The Belarusian roadster horse — our national pride — is known for its stamina and sporting qualities, as well as for its beauty and easy disposition.

Belarusian Federation of Equestrian Sport, led by Yuri German, the Chairman of the International Committee of Experts, presented



Thoroughbred horse show, hosted by the capital of Belarus, draws attention from visitors old and young



prizes. He tells us, "In assessing the horses, we tried to be impartial, inviting experts from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Each year, in my opinion, we see an even greater va-

riety of breeds. Foremost, we must give credit to the owners, who have brought such happiness in showing us their wonderful animals over the four day event."

More hospitable little houses in the country

By Olga Bebenina

The Minsk Region is a leader among regions in the amount of agrarian farmsteads

According to Vadim Karmazin, the Director of Tourism Department of the Ministry for Sports and Tourism, the capital's region has the biggest potential for development of agricultural tourism. There are 413 farmsteads in the Minsk Region, but this is not the limit.

"It is not by accident that the Minsk Region is a champion in amount of agricultural farmsteads," the Director noted. "The thing about agricultural tourism is that it develops around big cities where the demand for such services is concentrated. Besides, a significant part of health resort institutions are situated in this region."

Last year, farmsteads in the Minsk Region did \$9 billion of business. In the Brest and Mogilev regions it was \$4 billion, with a further \$6 billion in the Vitebsk Region. The Minsk Region takes second place after Minsk in the export of tourism services.