

Minsk lives by hockey

The World Championship has changed the city, touching even those corners of life which are far from sport

By Dmitry Komashko

Emotions

It seems that it is possible not only to watch hockey. It is also possible to feel it. To live each second and, together with the players, go through the whole kaleidoscope of emotions. This has been proved by fans of Russia and Latvia. Famous British football ultras can envy those performances, which these two armies arrange at the matches of their teams. However, hockey fans avoid fighting and hooliganism. Instead, they create an atmosphere which is difficult to describe in words. One can only feel it. And every person who is not indifferent to hockey should do this at least once.

Interest

Minsk never sleeps. During these May days, this phrase can be fully applied to the Belarusian capital. Cheerful, near-hockey life moves from hospitality zones to arenas and back, but apparently, it does not calm down for a minute. Sometimes it is no less interesting to observe this, than to watch the events unfolding on the ice. And this interest is mutual. While townspeople examine multi-coloured flags, improbable suits and the war paint of fans with surprise, they in turn, study the unknown country for themselves. They share impressions. About the roads — that surprised fans from neighbouring Latvia, with their lack of potholes and the presence of traffic lane markings, about the cleanliness of the streets and the affability of the Minsk residents, about the creativity of the organisers who, caring about the spectators, surpassed the majority of previous championships, admitted habitués of hockey tournaments.

“The first thing that is evident is the beauty of the city. The second is the friendliness of the people and their readiness to help,” said fans from Switzerland. “Certainly it is impossible to travel across the whole of Belarus in just a few days, but we will try,” hockey self-driving tourists from Russia agree with them. Certainly, it is impossible, but there will be a cause to return here once again!

City

Big hockey has influenced the life of Minsk residents, and not only those of them who are involved in the service of the tournament. A lot has been already

public transport dressed in strict vests and shirts, polite vendors and smiling waiters please the eye... It would be wonderful if they preserved the habit of smiling even after the World Championship!

Work

A lot of people — a lot of problems. Everyone who has ever tried to organise and carry out a really serious activity knows about that. And the Ice Hockey World Championship is not an exception. Teams and VIP-guests, fans and journalists — all have arrived with their own needs, desires and requirements. And to please them all is a serious test for all who in-

and critical army at once and mercilessly finds weak points of organisation. It is important to note, that there were no serious failures in Minsk, though at the beginning many people were afraid to go to Belarus. They also gossiped about the Internet. Whether it is expensive? Accessible? Whether it will provide all tourists with traffic? And it has provided! Irina Vysotskaya and Vladislav Vysotsky from Bryansk, who we met in the fanzone, offered a standard fans story about the cleanliness and beauty of Minsk, also complimented the World Wide Web.

“Being at such competitions you always want to be online, and Bela-



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said about the crews of traffic police spending nights in cars, and about yard cleaners keeping the round-the-clock watch. But there were no problems with aggressive visitors, or with garbage. Drivers of

involved in carrying out of the championship of services. The example of the Sochi Olympic Games, the reverse side of which at once found reflexion on the Internet, has demonstrated that this mixed

Fans like everything in Minsk rus in this sense pleases us. It is no problem to find Internet access. The speed enables to learn the news, and to send our photos home.”

And there is no lack of things to send.

Working mood for dialogue

By Vladimir Khromov

The situation in Ukraine obviously comes to the forefront in the dialogue with partners

It primarily refers to the Russian Federation. The two countries have common defence interests, close economic ties with the southern neighbour and are simply concerned about the fate of our brothers. These issues are tackled during the meetings of presidents, as well as of those of lower rank. Therefore, it could be assumed that this topic would have become one of the central at the meeting between Alexander Lukashenko and the Secretary of the Russian Security



Council, Nikolay Patrushev. The conversation took place before the consultations of state secretaries of the security councils.

In this respect, the concurrence is important from the point of view of the assessment of the prospects of the development of the situation, and co-ordination of action plays a very important role here.

The President reminded about the shared outlook on the events both from Moscow and Minsk. He particularly paid attention, “Firstly, the West should not use Ukraine as a factor to exert pressure on Russia, and not only Russia, because the deterioration of the situation, including in economics, affects all countries of the entire post-Soviet space.”

The Ukrainian issue was naturally tackled at the recent meetings in Moscow, involving presidents of the CSTO member states. Mr. Lukashenko said that the heads of state also tackled the problems of the Central-Asian region, that there are enough of them and that we cannot ignore this.

Mr. Patrushev looked with optimism on the work in Minsk. After the Victory Day celebrations, the mood favoured a joint discussion of security topics. “We just need to agree, co-ordinate our plans and then fulfil them. We are already doing this,” he said.

Word-for-word

President of Belarus:

The main thing is that Ukraine should remain Ukraine, not a NATO base near our borders. We do not hide our concerns. It is important for Russia and Belarus. And, of course, we would like this close Slavic people to stay friends with us. We want to trade with them and we want to live peacefully with them. Our culture and languages are similar. We lived well. We want to continue to live like this. But it is the choice of the Ukrainian people. They should arrange their lives the way they want, but they should not create problems for their neighbours. This is important. Ukraine is already sobering up. Ukraine will not be with the West. It is not welcome there. The people of Ukraine would like to co-operate. The politicians have gotten some kind of ‘mental meltdown’. Sometimes it happens, you know. For us and for Russia this situation is dangerous only in terms of potential problems in the future.

Power of the oncoming movement

The International Fund for Co-operation and Partnership of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (BSCSIF) suggests the realisation of a large innovation project in Belarus

Belarus discussed the implementation of joint projects in high-tech branches with the BSCSIF during a meeting between President Alexander Lukashenko and the Fund's President, Ismail Safi.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that Belarus is very interested in the development of high-tech science-driven industries. “The plans for this five-year period and the next one rely on science and the lat-

est technologies. Of course, we are interested in the prospects lying in such fields as nano-electronics, storage and accumulation of energy and others and this is something that your fund is doing,” noted the Head of State, addressing the foreign guest.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, the BSCSIF is a very strong organisation, which unites 28 countries. “This is a strong association, both economically and financially. I think it will be able to have a significant influence, or already has, on the development of the regional economy. If the fund shows good results, we can make a significant

contribution to the development of the global economy,” believes Mr. Lukashenko.

The Head of State assured that he is ready to provide all possible support to the fund's work in Belarus. “I guarantee full support to your fund. You know my policy. In this regard we are absolutely transparent and honest. We would like to see everything that you have promised implemented,” he said.

In his turn, Mr. Safi thanked the President of Belarus for the promise of co-operation. He drew particular attention to the geographical position of Belarus, which is located in a strategic point

and connects Asia and Europe.

The BSCSIF offers Belarus an innovative project which includes sub-projects in electronics (the production of appliances), power engineering (production of nano-carbon fibres for transmission lines), and road construction (lightweight building constructions), as well as the manufacturing of hydrogen fuel engines.

As Mr. Safi himself comes from Turkey, he expressed the hope that the implementation of joint projects between Belarus and the BSCSIF will give an additional impetus to the development of Belarusian-Turkish co-operation.