

# Plastics are so convenient

Popularity of banking cards continues, as this market is newly developing

Additional services and privileges are making the trade and service sphere more attractive but, despite efforts from the state and banks, Belarusians still prefer to shop with cash. Several reasons may be behind the unpopularity of plastic banking cards, although our citizens' conservatism is the major cause.

However, the Regional Manager for the VISA international payment system in Belarus, Igor Kovalev, notes that progress is evident. "Over the past year, use of our cards in the retail sector has risen by almost 50 percent," he says, adding, "Belarusians have already realised that a card is a convenient means of payment. We are now trying to encourage people to use their cards rather than cash." Although many people own cards, they tend not to use them; customers may only use a card once against every fifth or sixth cash transaction. Around the globe, others have faced the same dilemma of encouraging card use, with developing countries currently striving to make the change: the USA and Western Europe have long since chosen cards over cash.

Bankers consider that non-cash payments and growth in sales are links in a single chain, since non-cash payments offer a real competitive advantage for shops

of all kinds. "It's been proven that sellers using POS-terminals boost turnover, in comparison to their rivals using cash," explains the Deputy Chairman of the BelSwiss-Bank's Board, Vitaly Ryabtsev. "A large number of serious trading outlets already offer non-cash payment to customers."

Companies already using POS-terminals are also taking action to stimulate sales, since installing the necessary card-reading equipment is an expensive investment. Vitaly Laptенок, who heads the 'Finance.tut.by' project, says that popularising non-cash payments should contribute to co-branded banking products: bank cards issued jointly with another company. "Co-branded bank cards are profitable for the bank and its partner-company. They raise the volume of cards issued, expanding the number of customers. Meanwhile, the partner-company boosts sales. Customers usually benefit by receiving preferential terms from the partner-company," explains the specialist.

## The MT's reference:

In Belarus, 24 banks (out of 31 operating on the market) have already issued cards. As of early October 2010, about 9m banking cards were circulating in the country.



Non-cash payments and growth in sales are links in single chain

## Two capitals draw closer

By Alina Grishkevich

### Hungarian businesses invited for more active co-operation

Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Valery Voronetsky, has attended the second meeting of the Intergovernmental Belarus-Hungary Commission for Economic Co-operation, in Budapest. He underlined that much has been done to advance Belarusian-Hungarian economic interaction over the last year. However, the potential of our bilateral relationship is yet to be fully realised, despite good prospects for further development of mutually beneficial ties.

"Hungary is a good venue for promoting Belarusian produce, while being a gateway to other states in this region, taking into account the importance of Hungarian business," noted Mr. Voronetsky.

Meanwhile, Belarus offers access to the Customs Union, which unites a huge market of goods and services. "Barriers have been almost removed in our trade with Russia and Kazakhstan, allowing Hungarian companies arriving in Belarus to promote their interests throughout the Customs Union," asserted the Deputy Foreign Minister. He stressed the importance of geographical location, with Belarus and Hungary situated not far from each other. This should strengthen bilateral contacts. Mr. Voronetsky believes that the opening of a direct Minsk-Budapest flight should also intensify collaboration and rapprochement between our two countries.

# Evident benefits against background of world deficit

Three new drinking water bottling plants to be constructed in Belarus by 2013

By Olga Bogomazova

The new enterprises will be located in the Minsk region. "We'll have three new factories bottling drinking water in 2012, in 2013, at the latest," stresses Vladimir Tsalko, Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. "These will be built using Austrian, German, Dutch and Czech capital." Around 70 percent of the water produced will be exported.

According to Mr. Tsalko, investors arriving in Belarus are interested in drinking water manufacture, being particularly keen to work in Belarus' centre — in the Minsk region. "This is the most attractive market for them, since the necessary labour force is available," he explains. He hopes that, in future, foreign companies will also head for other regions of the country.

Mr. Tsalko asserts that water

is one of Belarus' major treasures, which should be used correctly. The issue is becoming more acute against the background of world forecasts regarding water deficits in many countries. A water strategy has been developed in Belarus, determining the best way to use water

asserts the Minister, underlining that separate wells require minimum costs, since water in them meets all international standards; only bottling is needed.

Geologists have determined that over 80 sites in Belarus are suitable for the construction of plants to extract and bottle fresh groundwater. Last year, the Geology Department prepared and sent a special reference book to potential investors, presenting complete information on the organisation of joint ventures to bottle drinking water in Belarus. It also tackled how to stimulate production and sell produce, as well as the peculiarities of exporting drinking water.

In 2009, Belarus exported \$3m of mineral water, with supplies delivered to Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Azerbaijan and Canada. However, over 90 percent is still sold domestically.



Facilities to bottle drinking water at a Zhlobin enterprise

resources for the next twenty years. In total, around 200 fresh groundwater deposits have been developed in the republic. "We extract around 900,000 cubic metres of water and have the ability to raise this to 20m,"

## End of 'age of Gutenberg'

By Victoria Kamendova

### Belarusian newspapers and energy posters could be printed on electronic paper

Despite trial research into electronic paper being conducted in the 1970s, it only began to take off twenty years later. Today, no one doubts that this achievement has far-reaching prospects.

The technological breakthrough has more common features with its cellulose predecessor than a contemporary digital display. Electronic paper is light and flexible, being able to hold texts and images indefinitely, without drawing electricity. Images are formed on traditional LCD displays by shining light through a matrix; electronic paper — just like traditional paper — creates an image by reflecting light. However, characters and symbols aren't drawn with printing ink onto paper sheets; they are sketched by a laser beam, with charged particles in microcapsules moved onto substrate from plastic, foil paper or fabric.

Reading texts on electronic paper is far less harmful than reading from a computer monitor, since eyes aren't strained in the same way. Electronic paper has no backlighting, so can be read in any light conditions. It has been created to overcome the disadvantages of LCD displays. However, during its application, another advantage was revealed: it consumes the minimum amount of energy, just enough to switch pixels using control electrodes. Testing posters on electronic paper, Japan's Toppan Printing calculated that a 3.2sq.m poster consumes only 24 Watts of electricity.

Having thoroughly studied world experience on the creation and application of electronic paper, Belarusian scientists from the Institute of Chemistry of New Materials at the National Academy of Sciences have decided to develop their own domestic colour version. Three years are needed to complete the project, with the first samples appearing soon.

## College of European knowledge

### Innovative centre opens at Republican Vocational Education Institute's Industrial and Pedagogical College

College Director Natalia Dedkova tells us that unique measuring equipment — worth around 0.5m euros — has been supplied as part of an investment and educational project, jointly implemented with German Hecht Electronic AG, with assistance from the German Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development. The college's new centre will promote all-round training of students to enhance their popularity on the labour market. Those with secondary special and higher education are to be trained and re-trained in the sphere of metrological control, to be later applied at wood- and metal processing enterprises, as well as in the furniture and timber industry. Moreover, the institution is to take part in the certification of furniture produce, due to its new equipment.