

# Long race of kindness

Belarusian athletes take part in *Give Children a Hand* charity campaign, hosted by Minsk's McDonald's — a sponsor of the National Olympic Committee of Belarus

By Irina Leshkevich

Olympic champions and prize holders from various years took part in the fund raising event: Igor Astapkovich, Irina Yatchenko, Tatiana Ledovskaya, Vasily Kaptyukh, Natalia Sazanovich and Inna Zhukova. They were joined by the rhythmic gymnastic team, which claimed bronze at the Beijing-2008 Olympic Games.

Inna Zhukova, who won silver at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing for rhythmic gymnastics, was taking part in the traditional McDonald's event for the first time. "Jointly with the serving staff, we chatted to customers while selling fries and 'Helping Hand' charms. We explained how the funds will be spent. It's great to be part of this; I'm glad that such events are organised in our country. Unfortunately, I have only now realised that it had been taking place for several years. However, I hope to take part for years to come now. I endeavour to support charities, regularly participating in the *Athletes to Children* campaign. Sadly, I can't do this all the time, because of my tough schedule, but I have some



Participants of *Give Children a Hand* charity campaign at Minsk McDonald's

free time at the moment. This is giving me more opportunities to be involved in charity work," notes Ms. Zhukova.

All the funds generated from the sale of 'Helping Hand' charms and fries are being spent on equipping centres for diagnostics and rehabilitation of physical and psychomotor disorders for children under the age of three, at Minsk's children's polyclinics. The latter opened as a result of fundraising from the *McHappy Day* in 2009. Such centres help support parents of disabled chil-

dren, assisting in their adaptation to difficult situations. They provide advice on how to work with these children at home.

"I very much want to help these children, although it's the first time I'm taking part in this charity event. It's a very unusual feeling. Our team was pleasantly surprised to receive an invitation," notes Alina Tumilovich, who won bronze with the Belarusian national rhythmic gymnastic squad for team exercises at the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

The *McHappy Day* event has

been held in Belarus since 2002 and many outstanding Belarusian athletes have taken part since its launch. "We're old-timers here. It's wonderful that athletes are invited and we have the chance to support children," stresses Tatiana Ledovskaya, 1988 Seoul Olympic champion in the 4x400m relay.

McDonald's customers were able to have their photo taken with the athletes and ask for autographs. The Olympic champions also signed a banner at the restaurant, wishing children good health and happy smiles.

## 19th century palace added to cultural heritage

By Darya Kurilova

**At auction, Russian investor buys manor originally built for French actress: 19th century Biszewski estate in Lyntupy**

The Biszewski estate and park ensemble in the Postavy district comprises a manor, outbuildings, a bridge, a park, a chapel and three ponds. Moscow's Russian Tradition has set up a limited liability company to implement the project, planning to build cultural and recuperative facilities over the next three years on the site. The investor has signed conservation obligations, committing to preserve the monument, which is registered on the State List of Historical and Cultural Values.

According to legend, nobleman Józef Biszewski constructed the manor for his beloved: a French actress. It's not known whether she actually visited the house, but each room was unique. The interiors amazed everyone with their luxury. The basements remain full of mysteries, with countless ancient family treasures still being unearthed.

Specialists believe that it's impossible to preserve this most interesting monument for our descendants without involving an investor. Attempts were made in 1991 to restore the site but lack of funds prevented action, with the estate falling into disrepair. Even excursions stopped visiting. Now, specialists are confident that the site will become a popular cultural treasure.

At present, eight other manors and estates await investors, in the Verkhnedvinsk, Beshenkovichi and Braslav districts.

## High-speed route for passengers

By Olga Belyavskaya

**Just two hours from Minsk to Vilnius**

Belarusian and Lithuanian railways' working groups have met in Minsk to discuss conditions for a high-speed passenger route between Minsk and Vilnius. The major goal of their joint work is to reduce the time needed to travel between our two capitals: from four to two hours.

The initial stage envisages a one hour cut in time (to three hours), with 50 minutes saved between

Minsk and Gudogai (on the state border) and 10 minutes saved from Vilnius to Kena (state border). The second stage envisages a saving of 23 minutes on Belarusian territory and 7 minutes on the Lithuanian side, with a final half hour saved in the third stage.

Belarusian and Lithuanian border and customs services also attended the meeting, discussing how best to reduce time spent on customs and border checking as the two pairs of trains travel between Minsk and Vilnius.

## Proposals available

**Belarus to raise exports of education services by 1.5 times**

The First Deputy Education Minister, Alexander Zhuk, explains that the ever growing number of foreign students confirms that international demand for Belarusian education is buoyant. At present, nearly 10,000 foreigners are studying in the country, having arrived from 84 states — up 1.5 times on 2006. "This trend

allows us to predict a rise of more than 1.5 times in revenue from the export of our education services," he notes, adding that positive changes are taking place at every level of the national education system. Foreign applicants are seeing this and are increasingly keen not only to attend our universities but to receive secondary special and vocational education.

## Rescuers help rescuers

Azerbaijan's Ministry for Emergency Situations interested in developments and achievements by Belarusian scientists



Mr. Heydarov familiarises with promising scientific developments

By Alexander Loikovich

The Ministry is showing interest in outfitting rescuers at a lower cost than it pays for Russian and Western analogues. "Previously, we purchased fire-fighters' uniforms from other states. However, we plan to shift to Belarusian uni-

forms," Azerbaijan's Minister for Emergency Situations, Kemaleddin Heydarov, informed journalists in Minsk.

During his stay, a comprehensive plan for 2011-2013 was approved, regarding co-operation between the Belarusian and Azerbaijani emergency ministries.

According to Mr. Heydarov, the document should create conditions for closer collaboration between our two states. He also appreciates the high level of training for rescuers in Belarus, saying, "This year, the first Azerbaijani alumni will graduate from the Command and Engineering Institute of Belarus' Emergency Ministry. They are receiving knowledge and skill, which are in great demand in their homeland."

In turn, Belarus' Emergency Minister, Enver Bariev, stressed that co-operation in educational and other spheres between the two states' ministries is unprecedented: in its intensity, efficiency, results and friendly approach.

Over 200 Azerbaijani students are currently studying at the Belarusian Command and Engineering Institute. Belarusian specialists are also helping train staff for Azerbaijan's Academy of Emergency Situations. A team of Azerbaijani young rescuers is a regular participant of the international camp-fire annually organised in Belarus.