

Tsentralny bus station welcomes

After long reconstruction, Minsk's new bus station is soon to open fully. Builders are working day and night to quickly complete this multi-functional complex



New Tsentralny bus station in Minsk will occupy a worthy place in transport infrastructure of the whole country

By Yekaterina Medvedskaya

Buses began to depart from Tsentralny bus station back in September, heading towards Brest and Grodno. I met Olga Gravyushko and her granddaughter Dasha at the station, setting off to visit relatives in Pinsk. It was their first time at the refurbished station and they were greatly admir-

ing the spacious platforms and LED screens hanging above. It's impossible to get lost, as the screens show clearly where to go and at what time each bus leaves.

Fourteen platforms grace the station, with at least twenty route buses leaving daily. People head to Brest and Baranovichi, Naroch and Novogrudok. There are even international

buses, travelling to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Munich, Paris, Strasbourg, Cologne, Vilnius, Prague, Palanga and a dozen other European cities.

The bus station's major building isn't yet complete but will have restaurants, shops and souvenir stores, as well as 3D cinemas, rest rooms and children's entertainment centres. Already,

passengers can relax in the waiting hall, with its cosy café, which offers hot coffee and tea; there's a newsstand while TV screens around the perimeter of the room show videos promoting Belarus' reserves, historical and architectural monuments, and beauty spots. A tourist bureau, offering excursions country-wide, is also situated there.

The ticket offices are in a neighbouring room, with no queues at all. Previously, at least ten people would be waiting at each window. Now, each of the twelve box offices is equipped with a computer, saving time. "Electronic ticket reservation system — Ticket Bus — has recently been introduced," notes booking clerk Zhan-

na Martseleva. "Many passengers are already using this system."

Information on each route is available from electronic reference terminals. I look up the Minsk-Vilnius route and the screen immediately displays the time of departure, the platform and the number of remaining seats.

Yulia Starovoitova, the Head of the Transportation Department, shows me a timetable for international routes; there are so many! "Trips abroad are very popular," notes Ms. Starovoitova. "It's hardly surprising, as going by bus is cheaper than train, let alone plane." Big discounts are available on international routes for youngsters and pensioners. "Of course, in summer, there are more students and schoolchildren," she adds. "In autumn, we primarily serve middle aged travellers and senior citizens."

The bus station can now rival the railway station, also recently reconstructed, in its number of passengers and appearance. The new building's mirror façade reflects the delighted faces of passers-by. Being located close by, the two stations harmoniously complement each other, creating a single, contemporary structure. Pleasingly, guests begin their acquaintance with the city with these wonderful stations. As they say, first impressions are vital.

Stone giant 'brought' by ice glacier

Stone weighing 97 tonnes, found during road works near Mozyr, could be oldest in country

By Andrey Novikov

A geological wonder has been discovered near the village of Drozdzy, as subsoil was removed during road works. At first, the stone sticking out from the earth didn't appear particularly special and certainly wasn't impressive in its size. However, it was buried to a depth of 4m, requiring 15 powerful machines to unearth it, including a crane with a 500 tonne lifting capacity and a platform able to transport 120 tonnes. The procedure to lift and transport the boulder was the first of its kind in our country.

Recently, the boulder was installed in Mozyr's Yunost Boulevard. Meanwhile, the District Executive Committee is yet to decide exactly how to present the final monument. It may become the centrepiece of a rock garden, bearing key dates from the history of the district.

Where did the boulder come from? Local historians believe that it arrived around 15,000 years ago. However, the Scandinavian glacier rock is considerably older, as Mozyr was only its final destination. Strangely, the stone was found not on the flat left bank of the River Pripyat, but on the hilly right bank, some 4km above the river bed.

Valery Vinokurov, a leading engineer with the Belarusian Scientific Research Geological Institute, tells us, "Size? Form? Colour? Of course, more detailed investigations are needed for a definite answer. Relying on the preliminary description, we can say that the stone was brought by the 'Dnieper' ice glacier 320-350 thousand years ago. It's likely to be of Scandinavian origin or hails from near the current Baltic Sea. It has travelled perhaps 1,500km, being polished along the way. Undoubtedly, it is a unique find."



This is maybe the oldest boulder in Belarus

Quick wit helps in merry tournament

Club for the Lightheaded and Quick-witted (KVN) teams from Gomel and Minsk reach finals of Eastern European KVN League

Gomel is to be represented by a select team from the KVN&Dance project at the finals of this international tournament, held in Moldova, while Minsk will be represented by the united team of Adrenalin and Double Espresso. Having reached the semi-finals, the Belarusian teams have decided to combine their efforts.

After two semi-final games, each of which included five contests (freestyle, workout, video contest, improvisational contest and home task), both teams are through to the finals of the tournament, where they'll face Moldovan Bouquet and Big-Bam. The date of the finals of the Eastern European KVN League is yet to be announced. Its finalists will automatically go through to the Central or Inter-regional KVN League.