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MINISTER: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION IS AMONG BELARUS' PRIORITIES

Environmental conservation and efficient use of natural resources is one of the priorities of the state policy, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Vladimir Tsalko said at an opening ceremony of the final round of the 11th National Ecology Forum in Bobruisk on 24 August, BelTA has learnt.

The forum kicked off in April. A number of various environmental campaigns, festivals, conferences, concerts and national contests at different levels have been held as part of this forum since then.

"We would like to tell the society how important it is to conserve the environment and protect nature," the Minister said. He added that the final of the forum showed a high level of ecological culture. Partaking in the event were over 500 delegates from all regions of Belarus and Minsk along with foreign guests, government officials, representatives of state administration bodies, educational and cultural institutions, public organizations and media.

The opening ceremony of the final round took place at Lenin Square. Prior to the ceremony the participants laid wreaths to the monument to General Boris Bakharov and then walked in procession to the square.

Participants of the ecological forum visited the enterprises to get familiar with the efficient use of natural resources and environmental protection practices. The guests of the forum visited the Osipovich hydroelectric station and a biogas unit at the agricultural enterprise Rassvet in the village of Myshkovichi, which was followed by the visit to the subsidiary Belynich Cheese Plant of OAO Babushkiva Krynka. There the guests were shown how whey is utilized and placed back into economic circulation. They also got familiarized with the sewage treatment technologies at Servolux Agro, the subsidiary of SZAO Servolux, and the use of broken glass in the manufacturing process at Yelizovo Glass Works. They also went to the Glusk District Consumers Society to see modern ways of long-time storage of fruit



and horticultural products, while at the Lenin health resort they were told how mineral water is used for treatment. They found out about the technologies used when manufacturing ecological tires at OAO Belshina. At the Bobruisk heat supply network of the national unitary enterprise of electric power Mogilevenergo they were shown how lignin is used as a fuel. After this they visited a waste sorting site in Bobruisk.

The ecological forum, which concluded on 25 August, was dedicated to the Year of Ecological Culture and Environmental Protection declared in the CIS in 2013.

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16.08.2013

UNIDO to set up clean technologies center in Belarus



The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) plans to set up a clean technologies center in Belarus as part of the regional Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP)

Demonstration Program, BelTA learnt from aide of the Chairman of the State Science and Technology Committee of Belarus Yuri Lukashевич.

"The program envisages cooperation with six countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia. The total financing of the four-year project will make up €12.5 million," Yuri Lukashевич said.

The implementation of the program will be divided into several stages. The first stage envisages the training of Belarusian specialists in the issues related to the development of new technologies. The second one will cover the development of concepts and assessment of the efficiency of new technologies. The third stage will focus on the support of the transfer of technologies.

The UNIDO, the State Committee for Science and Technology, the National Center for Technology Transfer, the National Academy of Sciences, the Economy Ministry and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection are expected to hold a meeting soon to discuss the implementation of the project in Belarus, including the selection of the organization-coordinator of the program.

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Sweden, Belarus to share experience in environmental monitoring



Belarusian and Swedish scientists will share the experience of holding different types of environmental monitoring at the conference "Environmental monitoring: scientific results, modern technology and prospects", BelTA learned from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

The event will be held as part of the 11th national environmental forum on 21 August. The event will take place at the consultation and methodological center of the State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus.

The meeting is scheduled to discuss the domestic and foreign experience of holding different types of environmental monitoring: air, water, land, flora and fauna, greenhouse gases, radiation.

The meeting will also analyze the effectiveness of the existing environmental monitoring systems, current environmental problems (chemical and radioactive contamination of soil, land degradation, air and water pollution, expansion of invasive plant species and others). Scientists will discuss the issues of the development of information systems to monitor the environment, the ways of improving the quality of the monitoring information and the extent of its use, and the public access to the research data.

The conference will bring together more than 100 people. Among them will be representatives of scientific, educational, industrial and other organizations of Belarus and Sweden.

The conference is organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus together with the research institute BelNITS Ecology, the center for environmental solutions, and the republican scientific and technical library.

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ENDANGERED SPECIES SURVEY UNDERWAY IN BELARUS

Belarus is carrying out a survey to evaluate the state of the species of plants, animals and fungi listed in the national Red Data Book, BeITA learnt from Tatyana Molyavka, a consultant at the biological and landscape diversity department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus.

Specialists of the National Academy of Sciences are studying the current distribution and the condition of the populations of endangered species. The survey is carried out within the framework of the preparation of the fourth edition of the Red Data Book of Belarus.

According to the current data, one type of moss - Irish Ruffwort - has stopped growing in the territory of Belarus. Earlier the species was under the threat of extinction and was included in the Red Data Book. "Now this species will fall into the "black list" which contains the information about the animals and plants that completely disappeared over the last 100 years.

The survey also revealed that populations of some species of plants have increased. *Campanula sibirica*, *Primula elatior*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Sesleria caerulea* can be withdrawn from the Red Data Book.



The scientists are going to find out what has influenced the populations of rare species and will take measures aimed to ensure the preservation of the species on the Red Data Book in the future.

The fourth edition of the Red Data Book of Belarus is planned to be released by the end of 2014. The first edition came out in 1981 and included 80 animal species and 85 species of plants. The second edition was published in 1993. It included 182 animal species, 180 species of plants, 17 species of fungi and 17 species of lichens. The third edition, currently in force, was issued in 2004. It includes 293 species of plants and 188 species of animals.

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Belarus' first solar plant to be built in Smorgon

Belarus' first solar power plant will be built in Smorgon, BeITA learnt from the economy committee of the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee.

The investment project "Construction and technical maintenance of power stations running on renewable energy sources (solar plants)" in Smorgon District will be implemented by the company Ecological Energy registered in the Smorgon District Executive Committee in July. The investment proposal was approved by the Grodno Oblast Executive Committee.



The company is set to build a power station with the total capacity of at least 17MW. A 36.8 hectare land has been allocated in the industrial zone of the city for the placement of solar cell batteries.

The investor is expected to put about Br375 billion in the project. The project envisages the creation of up to 50 new jobs.

The first construction stage that envisages the generation of 5MW of energy is planned for completion by June 2015. The second stage (6MW more) will be implemented by December 2016. The project is slated for completion by July 2018.

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7.08.2013

AtomEco 2013 to take place in Moscow in October

The 7th international forum AtomEco 2013 will be held in Moscow on 30-31 October. The Russian nuclear corporation Rosatom told BeITA that the major theme of the forthcoming forum will be "Nuclear energy - zero damage strategy".



Participants of the forum will discuss radioactive waste management (RW), spent nuclear fuel management (SNF), including international cooperation prospects and inter-industry technology transfer.

Taking part in the AtomEco 2013 forum will be leading Russian and international companies and research centers engaged in industrial waste treatment, RW and SNF management, environmental remediation, as well as representatives of regulatory and supervisory bodies.

The business program of the forum will be packed with events. They will include sessions and roundtables on the following topics "Technology development and formation of RW management system at all the stages of the life cycle. International practices", "Decommissioning of hazardous nuclear- and radiation facilities and rehabilitation of nuclear "legacy" installations", "International practices of creating radioactive waste sites: structure and safety guarantees in radioactive waste management", "Geological problems of water protection at nuclear installations", "Introduction of modern environmental monitoring and control systems at nuclear installations. Legal, technical and economic aspects".

The Russian nuclear corporation Rosatom, the organizer of the forum, noted that AtomEco serves as an international platform to discuss various environmental aspects of the nuclear industry. In 2012 the forum was attended by about 1,000 people. Taking part in it were 56 companies. The event was covered by over 50 Russian and foreign journalists.

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21.08.2013

Experts from 11 countries to discuss energy-efficient restoration in Minsk

Experts from 11 countries will discuss energy-efficient restoration of historical buildings at the international conference "Technologies of energy-efficient reconstruction and restoration of historical buildings" that will be held in Minsk on 4 September, BeITA learnt from Yuri Lukashevich, Aide to the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology of Belarus... [READ MORE](#)

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CIS intergovernmental council to discuss forestry development prospects



Forestry development prospects will be discussed at the 13th meeting of the CIS Intergovernmental Council on Wood and Paper Industry and Forestry on 22-23 August, BeITA learnt from spokeswoman of the Forestry Ministry of Belarus Ruzhena Novitskaya.

The agenda of the meeting will also include the areas of further social and economic development of the wood and paper industry and forestry services of the CIS member states, conservation of the historical and cultural heritage associated with forests and forestry, the results of CIS cooperation in the forestry sector. It is planned the parties will discuss organizational and information issues related to the implementation of the agreements on wildfire prevention and extinction at the border territories of the CIS countries.

Partaking in the meeting will be the forestry ministries of the CIS member states, representatives of the CIS Executive Committee, organizations of the wood and paper industry, labor unions, scientists.

Belarus is currently presiding at the CIS Intergovernmental Council Wood and Paper Industry and Forestry. Forestry Minister of Belarus Mikhail Amelyanovich is the chairman of the council. He was elected to the post at the 12th meeting that took place in Saint Petersburg in July 2012.

Among the priorities of the CIS Intergovernmental Council on Wood and Paper Industry and Forestry is to assist stabilization and development of the wood and paper industry and forestry in the CIS, adopt coordinated measures for mutual provision of the markets with forest products, to secure a rational use of forest raw material resources. Another important goal of the council is to assist in the work on sustainable, economically sound, eco-friendly and socially oriented forest administration and forest use.

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BOUNDARIES OF GRODNO PUSHCHA LANDSCAPE RESERVE ADJUSTED

The boundaries of the national landscape reserve "Grodno Pushcha" have been adjusted. The new territory is defined in Resolution No. 669 of the Council of Ministers "On adjusting the territory of the national landscape reserve "Grodno Pushcha" dated 29 July 2013 which was officially published on the national legal Internet portal on 1 August, BeITA learnt.

Amendments have been introduced to Regulation No. 1833 of the Council of Ministers as of 27 December 2007 "On national wildlife reserves". Now Grodno Pushcha reserve will include the lands of the agricultural companies "Gozha" (1327.87 hectares), "Zarechny-Agro" (806.75 hectares), the forest area of the Grodno Forestry in certain quarters of the Augustow Forestry (8417.9 hectares), Sopotskin Forestry (2796.7 hectares) and Gozha Forestry (6958.23 hectares), and also the reserve lands- parts of the rivers Neman, Chernaya Gancha (208.14 hectares).

As a result of the boundary changes the total area of the reserve decreased from 20,903 hectares to 20,515.59 hectares. Some lands have been withdrawn from the reserve, including the land of the agricultural company "Niva 2003" (38 hectares), and some lands of the agricultural companies "Zarechny-Agro" and "Gozha". The forest areas in the forestries that used to be part of the reserve have been reduced. The land reserve has decreased by 149 hectares.

The Grodno District Executive Committee have been instructed to make sure that the territorial unit is registered within the six-month period and special information signs on the boundaries of the reserve be installed.

The national landscape reserve "Grodno Pushcha" was founded in 2007 on the territory of the previously existing biological reserves "Gozha" and "Sopotskin". It is designed to preserve the natural landscapes, forest and meadow ecosystems, wild plants and wild animals that have been included in the Red Book of Endangered Species of the Republic of Belarus, and their places of growth and habitat. This area is part of a large forest on the border of Belarus, Lithuania and Poland.

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2.08.2013



Berezinsky nature museum to open in October after makeover

The nature museum in the Berezinsky biosphere reserve will open in October after renovation, BeITA learnt from head of the ecotourism department of the reserve Sergei Moroz.

The makeover which was launched in March included a capital repair of the building, replacement of the heating and lighting equipment and air conditioners, some wall and window constructions.

According to Sergei Moroz, the nature museum of the Berezinsky biosphere reserve displays a wide range of flora and fauna of Belarus. The museum demonstrates various types of Belarusian landscapes as well as expositions featuring bio groups of animals and birds. "The museum possesses Belarus' biggest collection of bird species: about 150, with many of them included into the Endangered Species List," Sergei Moroz added.

The nature museum was set up in 1983. Its major goal is to provide information on the original beauty and riches of forests, water bodies, flora and fauna of Belarus.

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6.08.2013

Belarus ready to export up to 40m items of forestry material to CIS annually

Belarus is ready to export annually up to 40 million of forestry material items to the CIS countries, Forestry Minister of Belarus Mikhail Amelyanovich told media ahead of a meeting of the CIS Intergovernmental Council for Timber Processing Industry and Forestry in Brest, BeITA has learnt.

Belarus has a highly efficient technology to develop and cultivate forest reproductive material. The Russian Federation has already bought over 100 million items of the kind. The talks are underway on a new batch of 20 million items, which is to be delivered to Russia this autumn. According to the minister, it is more profitable for Russia to purchase forestry material from Belarus than grow it themselves.

Russia and Belarus are also discussing the issue of using the forest inventory experience of Belgosles Company.

In 2013 the CIS is marking the 15th anniversary of the intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the timber processing industry and forestry. The meeting of the CIS Intergovernmental Council for Timber Processing Industry and Forestry will take place in Belovezhskaya Pushcha on 22-23 August. Partaking in the meeting will be heads of the CIS forestry ministries, representatives of the CIS Executive Committee, organizations of the timber processing complex, trade unions, and scientists... [READ MORE](#)

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BEREZINA RIVER TO BE RESTOCKED WITH STERLET



A batch of about 700-1,000 young sterlet fish will be planted into the Berezina river on 24 August, BelTA learnt from the spokesperson for the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environment Ministry Olga Lelyukova.

The event is part of the effort to restock the Belarusian rivers with sterlet, which is an endangered species in Belarus. "According to estimates, the positive biological effect will be achieved in 2015-2017," Olga Lelyukova added.

This will be the third time the Belarusian rivers have been repopulated with sterlet. In 2010 and 2011 young sterlet fish were planted into the Pripyat River in Luninets District. The experiment proved to be successful.

In the first half of the 20th century the sterlet population in the Belarusian rivers was abundant. However, in 1981 this fish was included in Belarus' Red List of Endangered Species as its population became small and found itself on the brink of extinction.

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21.08.2013

Miniscule share of GM food on Belarusian market



The amount of products that contain genetically modified organisms (GMO) has stayed at 1% on the Belarusian market for the last few years, BelTA learned from Lyudmila Melnikova, Head of the Nutrition Department of the Food Research and Practice Center of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

Surveys indicate that the amount of products that contain GMOs is comparatively small in Belarus and has stayed at 1% for the last few years. In no way do GMOs prevail over conventional products, said Lyudmila Melnikova.

She remarked that the safety of food based on genetically modified organisms for human health is debated all over the world. However, for now neither adherents nor opponents of GMOs wield a sufficient number of arguments and scientific facts to prove their point.

At the same time Belarus has developed and continuously improves a system to control the turnover of GMOs. Relevant practices have been introduced into the operation of auditing services, the customs service, the national agribusiness, and other interested parties.

A list of raw materials and foods subject to GM content control has been compiled. It includes products made from genetically modified soybeans and corn. In line with the relevant Council of Ministers resolution such products need special labels clearly stating they are genetically modified or contain engineered components.

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19.08.2013

Belarusian scientists eager to take part in NICA collider project



Three Belarusian research institutions intend to take part in implementing the international project NICA that will complement the Large Hadron Collider in CERN, Switzerland, the press service of the State Science and Technology Committee of Belarus told BelTA.

The United Informatics Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Pavel Sukhoi State Technical University of Gomel, and the B.I. Stepanov Physics Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus plan to take part in theoretical research in the area of spin physics and baryon matter studies as part of the project Nuclotron-based Ion Collider fAcility (NICA). NICA relies on using superconductor rings to accelerate and collide opposed beams of heavy ions.

Apart from that, Belarusian scientists are ready to take part in the development of software and the enhancement of supercomputing infrastructure, fulfillment of tasks as part of pre-projects in the area of designing and manufacturing components for accelerating and detecting machines and electronics, in creating special materials and composites.

Participation in and implementation of the NICA project were discussed at a recent conference of plenipotentiary representatives of the member states of the international intergovernmental research organization Joint Institute for Nuclear Research.

Specialists and scientists from Russia, Bulgaria, Germany, India, South Africa, Ukraine, China, Kazakhstan, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Belarus determined interests of each country in the implementation of the NICA project and related applied research and development, including business-oriented scientific applications and technologies.

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13.08.2013

Spent fuel from Belarusian NPP to be sent to Russia

The spent fuel from the Belarusian nuclear power plant will be sent to the Russian Federation, Chief Engineer of the Directorate for the Construction of the Nuclear Power Plant Anatoly Bondar said when answering the questions during the public hearings with representatives of the Lithuanian public in Ostrovetz on 17 August, BelTA learned.

"The spent fuel will be sent to Russia. This is stipulated in the agreement with Russia. Regarding the radioactive waste generated during the operation of the nuclear power plant, no agreement is required. Such wastes are stored in a special unit at the plant. According to the design, the radioactive wastes in this unit can be stored for 10 years and even more. After this period expires there are two possible options: either expand the capacity of the storage unit or transport the waste to a special central repository in the country," Anatoly Bondar said.

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19.08.2013

Materials on Belarusian NPP public hearings to be included into EIA report

Materials of the Belarusian-Russian public hearing held in Ostrovetz on 17 August to discuss the report on environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Belarusian nuclear power plant will be included into the final EIA report, Deputy Chairman of the Ostrovetz District Executive Committee Viktor Sivilo said wrapping up the meeting, BelTA has learnt.

According to the organizers, the debates in Ostrovetz lasted for more than four hours. The participants of the meeting were presented detailed reports on all possible impact the construction and operation of the nuclear power plant may have on the environment of the region. All those who wished to speak up were heard out. Comprehensive competent answers were given to all the questions raised at the meeting. The questions that were not voiced could be passed to the organizers of the meeting in a written form. The protocol of the Ostrovetz meeting will be prepared and published on the website of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Belarus in the Russian and Lithuanian languages.

Nearly 190 public members, including 102 from the Lithuanian side, registered to partake in the debates. The total amount of the participants exceeded 300 people. Belarusian and Lithuanian media were given a tour of the NPP construction site. Partaking in the hearings on Belarus' behalf was First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Vitaly Kulik, Deputy Energy Minister Mikhail Mikhadyuk, Chairman of the Radiation Protection Commission under the Council of Ministers Yakov Kenigsberg. Besides, attending the hearings was a big group of state and independent experts, environmental observers, representatives of the general contractor and the general customer of the nuclear station.

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19.08.2013

Lithuanian authorities fail to attend public hearings on Belarus' NPP project in Ostrovetz

Belarus invited representatives of the Lithuanian ministries and government agencies to participate in the public hearings on the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant, but none of the representatives arrived for this event, First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus Vitaly Kulyk said during a meeting with representatives of the Lithuanian public on 17 August, BelTA learned.

According to the First Deputy Minister, the Belarusian side was ready to give answers to the questions of the representatives of Lithuania who arrived in Ostrovetz for the public debate. He noted that the current meeting was not mandatory from the point of view of the Espoo Convention. "However, Belarus is doing it," said Vitaly Kulik. He said that in violation of the recommendations of the Espoo Convention, the Lithuanian side did not post Belarus' EAI report on their Internet resources. Belarus had to translate the document into Lithuanian and post it on the websites of the Belarusian government bodies.

Vitaly Kulik recalled that the first hearing in Vilnius in 2010 was attended by about 80 people on behalf of Lithuania.

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19.08.2013

MIKHADYUK: OSTROVETS SITE WAS CHOSEN FOR ITS SAFETY



The Ostrovetz site was chosen to build the Belarusian NPP for safety reasons, Deputy Energy Minister of Belarus Mikhail Mikhadyuk told reporters on 17 August during Belarus-Lithuania public hearings on the report on environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Belarusian NPP in Ostrovetz, BelTA has learnt.

Initially two more sites located in Mogilev Oblast were considered, but sinkholes were detected there. "Today the international community has no clear-cut methods to prevent possible issues associated with construction of nuclear power plants at such sites; neither has it engineering solutions to avoid problems afterwards. The expected soil-bearing load of the NPP will be felt at the depth of 75 meters; at those sites sinkholes were found at the depth of 35 meters and they were watered," the Deputy Energy Minister said. He informed that two institutions, namely the Vedeneyev All-Russia Scientific Research Hydraulic-Engineering Institute and Kievatomproekt from Ukraine, strongly advised against those construction sites and recommended the Ostrovetz site because it was the safest one from the point of view of the stability of the earth crust there.

The Deputy Energy Minister was surprised to find out that representatives of Lithuanian mass media and the public with who he talked on the sidelines of the hearings were not aware of this information. "It was long ago that we submitted this information to Lithuanian officials asking them to forward this information to the public and government agencies. It seems like they ignored our request. Not everything we officially sent to Lithuania was made public," Mikhail Mikhadyuk said.

He referred to the Rovno NPP in Ukraine as an example of the wrong choice of the construction site that disregarded sinkholes. Forty years after the construction of the NPP, construction workers still pump reinforced concrete in the place where the major installations were built to avoid negative consequences.

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19.08.2013

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Belarus' public awareness campaign on NPP construction meets international standards

Nuclear station construction fateful for Ostrovetz District
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Thousands employed at Belarusian nuclear station construction site

NUCLEAR POWER OFFERS MULTIPLE ADVANTAGES, INDIAN SCIENTIST SAYS

Nuclear power engineering is safer in comparison with power engineering based on subsoil resources, BelTA learned from Prodipto Ghosh, an honorable member of the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), member of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change of India.

"As a scientist I can say that nuclear energy has been used for 60 years already. Today we can compare risks of using nuclear power plants with risks of using other sources of energy. In comparison with other kinds of power generation, for instance, those using coal, gas, and oil, nuclear power is safer taking into account environmental damage and damage to human health per total number of work hours. Accidents are less frequent in nuclear power engineering and their total death toll is way smaller. It is confirmed by global statistics," stressed the expert.

Prodipto Ghosh added that coal mines alone kill hundreds of people every year due to all kinds of accidents while air pollution caused by using fossil fuels kills more than one thousand people all over the globe every year... [READ MORE](#)

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Belarus to commemorate nuclear testing victims
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Polotsk 3rd at Lithuania's floral carpet competition



Polotsk flower carpet took the third place at an international floral competition in Anyksciai, Lithuania, BELTA learnt from the Polotsk District Executive Committee.

The flower carpet competition in Anyksciai was held as part of the project "Fostering capacity for tourism development in Latgale-Utena-Vitebsk cross border region" (BELLA DVINA 2) of the transboundary program to promote cooperation between Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus.

According to the executive committee, certain rules should be followed in the creation of flower carpets. For instance, the area should be of at least 15 square meters; only natural materials (plants and their parts, sand, stones, etc) should be used. Besides, a floristic masterpiece should be durable and resistant to natural forces.

The Polotsk flower carpet was made in the form of a Belarusian towel with the ornament produced from red carnations and white chrysanthemums. The composition numbered over 1,000 flowers in blossom. It took seven hours and 15 people to create it.

The Polotsk floristic masterpiece was recognized one of the best in the nomination "Preservation of National Identity and Heritage".

Partaking in the competition were teams from 27 cities of the border regions of Lithuania and Latvia. Belarus was presented at the event by Polotsk florists.

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SRI LANKA INVITES BELARUS TO DEVELOP MEDICAL, ECO-TOURISM

Sri Lanka suggests developing medical and ecological tourism in cooperation with Belarus, Sri Lankan External Affairs Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris said during the Belarus-Sri Lanka tourism forum on 27 August. Attending the event was Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, BELTA has learnt.

"Tourists from Belarus are attracted to Sri Lanka not merely by sun, sea and sand. We offer the most ancient medical system, Ayurveda, which is becoming increasingly popular. We are also ready to continue cooperation in eco-tourism," Gamini Lakshman Peiris said. According to him, tourism unites peoples and fosters the development of economy and culture, which is why Sri Lanka is interested in establishing close cooperation with Belarus in the field of tourism.

During the forum a memorandum of mutual understanding on cooperation in air transport was inked between the Belarusian Transport and Communication Ministry and the Sri Lankan Civil Aviation Authority. From the Belarusian side the document was signed by Director of the Aviation Department of the Transport and Communication Ministry Vladimir Kostin. Udayanga Weeratunga, Ambassador Extraordinary and



Plenipotentiary of Sri Lanka to Russia and Belarus on concurrent, put his signature to the document from the Sri Lankan side.

According to Vadim Karmazin, Director of the Tourism Department of the Belarusian Ministry of Sport and Tourism, tourist flows will depend on transport connection between the two countries. "Currently Belarus does not have a direct flight connection with Sri Lanka but this matter will be discussed in the future. Figures show that with the establishment of a direct air service, tourist numbers increase by three to five times," Vadim Karmazin underlined.

Another document signed at the forum was a memorandum of understanding between the Belarusian National Union of Tourism Organizations and the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority.

The program of the forum also included presentations by major Sri Lankan tour operators and hotel networks and bilateral meetings of representatives of tourism businesses.

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27.08.2013



Blueprint for new national demographic security program due in 2014

A concept of the new national program for demographic security of the Republic of Belarus will be drawn up in 2014, Deputy Labor and Social Protection Minister Alexander Rumak said during an online conference hosted by the websites of BELTA and the Labor and Social Protection Ministry on 27 August.

"The concept will outline the areas of demographic development of our country. The draft of the program will be unveiled in 2015," Alexander Rumak said.

Alexander Rumak noted that in H1 2013 Belarus' cities, towns and villages have seen a continued upward trend in birth rate.

The highest birth rate in January-June 2013 was registered in Brest Oblast (12.7 per 1,000), while the lowest figure was registered in Vitebsk Oblast (10.7). The highest number of newborn babies was in Minsk and Minsk Oblast. In the Belarusian capital the birth rate was 10,974 babies, which was up 4.6% as against January-June 2012, while in Minsk Oblast this figure stood at 8,857 (up 5.3%). Among other cities (apart from the capital) it was Gomel which held the lead with 2,705 newborn babies (up 6.5%).

In H1 2013 the highest number of new arrivals was registered in Minsk (1,339 babies), Borisov (1,063), Lida (894), Molodechno (857), Soligorsk (846), Mozyr (793), Orsha (782) and Zhlobin (751) Districts. The lowest birth rate was seen in Mogilev Oblast's Krasnopolye District (64) and Vitebsk Oblast's Rossony and Ushachi Districts (66 babies each).

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BELARUSIANS ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL SPACE SCHOOL IN SAMARA

Belarusians are taking part in the 9th International Space School which opened in Samara on 19 August.

The goal of the school is to shape a single inter-university education space in the area of promising space technologies. According to Igor Belokonov, director of the school and professor at Samara's State Aerospace University (SGAU), the two-week school brought together representatives of universities from Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Spain, Germany, Colombia and Estonia. The students will familiarize themselves with the university's program for scientific experiments, plans for the development of the Samara-based space rocket center TSKB-Progress, and hear a course of lectures on the engineering and control of micro- and nano-scale satellites. Participants of the school studies will acquire knowledge of the use of computer-aided technologies for making satellites and designing electronic systems of spacecraft.

The school's education program has been recognized by SGAU's foreign partner universities and may be subsequently taken into account in the Master's Degree curriculum.

The school runs until 31 August.

The international summer space schools have been held in Samara since 2003. The activities of the first schools resulted in the implementation of the space mail project YES-2 funded by the European Space Agency...

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Belarus population at 9.462m as of 1 August

According to the latest data, the number of people who live in Belarus totaled 9,461,500 as of 1 August. In January-July 2013 Belarus' population reduced by 2,300 people, BELTA learned from Press Secretary of the Belarusian National Statistics Committee Olga Klavut.

In January-July only Minsk saw an increase in the number of residents. The figure went up from 1,901,000 people registered as of 1 January 2013 to 1,907,700 as of 1 August. The number of residents in other regions of the country dropped during this time. As of 1 August there were 1,426,400 residents in Gomel Oblast, 1,403,100 in Minsk Oblast, 1,389,300 in Brest Oblast, 1,204,400 in Vitebsk Oblast, 1,074,500 in Mogilev Oblast, and 1,056,100 in Grodno Oblast.

In January-July 2013 as many as 66,876 children were born in Belarus, up 2,521 from the same period last year. In January-July 2013 the overall birth rate totaled 12.2 per 1,000 people (11.8 in January-July 2012). The highest birth rate was registered in Minsk Oblast (13 per 1,000), while the lowest figure was registered in Vitebsk Oblast (10.9 per 1,000).

In January-July 2013 as many as 74,891 people died in Belarus, 362 up as against January-July 2012. The natural decline amounted to 8,015 people. The crude death rate totaled 13.6 per 1,000 people, the same as in January-July 2012. The highest death rate was registered in Vitebsk Oblast (15.7 per 1,000), with the lowest one registered in Minsk (9.4 per 1,000).

In January-July 2013 migration gain rose by 36.6% from the same period last year to 5,645 people. Migration surplus reduced the natural decline by 70.4% (40.6% in January-July 2012).

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555 centenarians live in Belarus

There are 555 centenarians in Belarus, BELTA learned from Svetlana Yermakovich, the head of the department for veterans and disabled persons at the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

According to her, women traditionally prevail among long-livers in Belarus. As of 1 July this year, 479 women and 76 men have turned 100. Thus, women are six times as many as men among long-livers in the country.

There are 9 people in Belarus who lived to see their 110th birthday and all of them are women, stressed Svetlana Yermakovich.

Grodno Oblast is traditionally among the leaders in Belarus by number of centenarians: as of 1 July, there were 117 people over 100. Minsk Oblast goes second (98) and Brest Oblast is third (94). Vitebsk Oblast is home to 81 people who have already celebrated their 100th birthday. There are 66 long-livers in Gomel Oblast, 52 in Mogilev Oblast, and 47 in the city of Minsk.

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CIS states to update digital changelog of geographic names

The digital bulletin containing changes of geographical names in the Commonwealth of Independent States will be updated. Efforts to that effect will be discussed at a session of the CIS Interstate council for geodesy, cartography, cadaster, and remote sensing of the Earth in the national park Belovezhskaya Pushcha on 20-24 August... **READ MORE**

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