Belarus ready to implement UNECE Environmental Performance Review recommendations

Belarus is ready to implement the recommendations given in the Third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) conducted by the UNECE experts, Belarus’ Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Protection Andrei Kovytko said when speaking at the opening of the Forum of Environmental Decisions, during which the third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Belarus was launched, BelTA has learnt.

"The third EPR provides a detailed analysis of the progress in the field of environmental protection in Belarus. Today I would like to note that Belarus is ready to commit itself to the implementation of the recommendations given by international experts," the Minister stressed.

Belarus will focus on the creation and development of infrastructure of "green" low-carbon public transport, development of the legal framework for organic agriculture, enforcement of ecological certification for the environmental management systems and product environmental standards, the national plan of action for the implementation of the green economy principles in the country, the minister informed.

"Belarus has defined a national development strategy for the near future. One of its priorities is environmental protection. Our country has no environmental hot spots. Still there are problems, the solution of which depends on the successful social and economic development of the society. Over the past decade, the state environmental policies has led to significant improvements in the quality of life, which is evidenced by the findings of independent international experts who conducted the third EPR," Andrei Kovytko noted.

The third EPR of Belarus was conducted by the UNECE experts in 2015. It is an effective instrument for the promotion of national environmental policy and helps identify problems and challenges in the field of environmental protection and attract expertise and financial resources of international organizations and donor countries for their solution.


BELTA, 2.06.2016

EU provides €12m to facilitate Belarus’ transition to green economy

At least 10,000 electric vehicles in Belarus by 2025

Gates open wide to new opportunities

Belarus-Russia Union State plans to hold year of tourism

Bark beetles infringe on the sacred

Belarus working hard to introduce green economy principles

Belarus focusing on green economy approach

Belarus, Armenia to cooperate in environmental protection

Belarus proposes to harmonize approaches to GMOs in Union State

Belarus voices proposals for cooperation on Chernobyl under UN

Belarus ready to help Egypt with irrigation of agricultural lands

Belarus ready to implement UNECE Environmental Performance Review recommendations

The third EPR of Belarus was launched, BelTA has learnt.

The fact that this is the third EPR shows that the country pays increased attention to environmental issues. Environmental policy is an integral part of national security. This is why careful attitude to all resources, the harmonious development of economy and nature conservation have become the focus of development in our country," the Belarusian Prime Minister noted.

The Prime Minister noted that Belarus fully supports the efforts of the UNECE to conduct such surveys for countries of economies in transition. "High political status and credibility of the EPR enhance the country's image on the international arena and contribute the development of international relations. An objective assessment of foreign experts and their vision of our development are important for us," he said.

Andrei Kovytko noted that Belarus keeps pace with modern trends and can offer its achievements to the international community. "Our country was the first among the CIS countries to have introduced the principle of extended producer responsibility. The country has also developed a system of measures for greening the economy to ensure environmental sustainability, employment and competitiveness of Belarusian goods," he noted.

According to the Prime Minister, Belarus will continue to work on promoting sustainable consumption and production models in all sectors of the economy, transition to green procurement and innovation technologies.

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BELTA, 2.06.2016

Environmental policy viewed as part of national security in Belarus

Environmental policy is an integral part of national security, Belarus Prime Minister Andrei Kovytko said when speaking at the opening of the Forum of Environmental Decisions, during which the third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Belarus was launched, BelTA has learnt.

"Belarus has defined a national development strategy for the near future. One of its priorities is environmental protection. Our country has no environmental hot spots. Still there are problems, the solution of which depends on the successful social and economic development of the society. Over the past decade, the state environmental policies has led to significant improvements in the quality of life, which is evidenced by the findings of independent international experts who conducted the third EPR," Andrei Kovytko noted.

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BELTA, 2.06.2016
BELARUS CONSIDERING SIGNING PROTOCOL ON STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Belarus is considering the idea of acceding to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, which works within the framework of the Espoo Convention, after it learned from Belarusian First Deputy Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister Ilya Malkina on 3 June.

The official said: “We are thinking about acceding to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment. Moreover, the seventh meeting of the parties to the Espoo Convention will take place in Minsk in June 2017, where the Belarusian delegation has already established a committee to prepare for the event. We are now addressing technical issues of our accession to the Protocol before that. We may do it.”

Ilya Malkina explained that by acceding to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment Belarus will undertake a number of commitments. “First of all, we will have to discuss the adoption of any government programs with our neighbors, which interests may be affected within the framework of transboundary cooperation. In line with the Espoo Convention we are supposed to discuss with them only concrete projects, for instance, industrial installations while government programs fall below the radar,” she stressed.

The First Deputy Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister explained that Belarus already works to improve national legislation in this sphere. “We have given the first reading to amendments of the environmental legislation in this sphere. The amendment introduces strategic environmental evaluation. The amendment introduces strategic environmental evaluation, prevention, support and bolster efforts of individual nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Apart from that, the parties that have responded to the Astana Water Action proposals will share their experience of using the initiative since its launch in 2011.”

BELTA, 8.06.2016

BELARUS VOICES PROPOSALS FOR COOPERATION ON CHERNOBYL UNDER UN

A special discussion, Prevention and Mitigation of Consequences of Man-Made Catastrophes: the Example of Cooperation on Chernobyl under the UN, took place in the UN headquarters in New York, BelTA learnt from the press service of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador-General for Multilateral Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, took part in the event as a key speaker. “The Belarusian diplomat presented proposals of our country for the further international cooperation in the Chernobyl issues. Such cooperation was supported by participants of the roundtable, including Russia and Kazakhstan,” the press service said.

A specially invited expert of the U.S. Department of State, the Chernobyl Seminar at the modern nuclear safety development. Cooperation in mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl accident made the foundation of the document.

Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS of the UN Development Program Cihan Sultanoğlu told the participants of the meeting about the main achievements in the international Chernobyl cooperation as part of the UN efforts to reduce and promote sustainable development of the Chernobyl-hit regions.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development Lenni Montiel, for his part, drew the attention of the participants to the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the regions hit by industrial accidents.

Various aspects of interaction on Chernobyl were voiced by representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Health Organization, and the UN Environment Programme.

“Participants stressed that the interdisciplinary nature of the Belarus-sponsored roundtable greatly enriched the discussion within the UN on many issues interrelated with Chernobyl: sustainable development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, healthcare, environmental protection,” the press service noted.

The event in the format of the roundtable was organized by the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the American non-governmental organizations “Chernobyl Project” and “American Foundation”. The main objective of the roundtable was to review the global experience on Chernobyl issues in the light of its relevance in the context of international efforts to respond to technological accidents.

BELTA, 6.06.2016

BELARUS 5TH WATER RICHEST COUNTRY IN EUROPE

Belarus is 5th in Europe in terms of the area of water resources. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection Andrei Kovkhuto told a press conference hosted by BelTA on 6 June.

“Water resources of our country are indeed sufficient to meet the current and future needs. Water availability per capita in Belarus is 6,100 cubic meters per year, which is higher than the European average but much higher than in neighboring countries: Poland with 1,700 cubic meters per year and Ukraine with 10,100 cubic meters per capita,” the minister said.

However, the underground water resources are distributed unevenly throughout the country: Minsk Oblast has the greatest amount of groundwater depth, and Brest Oblast the lowest.

The quality of groundwater, including mineral water, and their stocks are sufficient enough to meet the domestic drinking needs, to export bottled water, and also use it for therapeutic and recreational purposes. About 50 health resorts in Belarus provide services using more than 30 kinds of mineral water.

“All these facts indicate that our country is not facing the problem of the shortage of freshwater. However, this does not mean that we can mindlessly use this invaluable resource. Therefore, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection conducts a national risk assessment aimed at monitoring the use and quality of water resources. We actively promote advanced energy and resource-saving technologies that reduce the water consumption intensity and also small-scale use and waterless production technologies,” Andrei Kovkhuto said. In Belarus there are more 20,000 rivers, about 10,000 lakes, and 153 artificial water bodies.

BELTA, 2.06.2016

BELARUS WORKING HARD TO INTRODUCE GREEN ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

A national action plan to introduce green economy principles in Belarus will be worked out by the end of this year. Belarusian Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Andrei Kovkhuto made the statement during the eighth ministerial conference Environment for Europe for Belarus held in Batumi, Georgia on 8 June, the Ministry’s press service told BelTA.

Andrei Kovkhuto said during the opening ceremony: “Environmental policy is a key component of national security and an important part of Belarus’ sustainable development. Belarus does not shy away from modern trends. We are strongly interested in the development of a green economy and consider it as a strategic necessity. We have given the necessary conditions to modernize our economy. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection works out this year. Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection conducts a national action plan to introduce green economy principles in Belarus.”

The eighth ministerial conference Environment for Europe gathered 39 heads of ministries responsible for environmental protection and education in the UNECE region, from member states, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Such events are arranged by the Environmental Policy Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe once every two years. The events represent a platform for cooperation between UNECE member states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties in working out important decisions concerning environmental protection.

Participants of the conference are expected to discuss the potential role of multilateral environmental agreements in the efficiency of environmental efforts, the Environmental Action Program task force, regional environmental centers and other instruments used to provide support and bolster efforts of individual nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Apart from that, the parties that have responded to the Astana Water Action proposals will share their experience of using the initiative since its launch in 2011.

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BELTA, 2.06.2016
BELARUS READY TO HELP AFGHANISTAN WITH IRRIGATION OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS

B.Possible participation of Belarusian companies in projects related to the irrigation and development of new agricultural land in Afghanistan was discussed at a meeting between Belarusian Ambassador to Afghanistan Sergey Rachkov and Afghan Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohamed Hanif Atmar.

The parties discussed promising areas of bilateral cooperation in water management, including joint research in the exploitation of water resources.

Sergey Rachkov and Mohammed Abdel Atty agreed to establish a joint Belarus-Afghanistan Working Group on Water Management and Environmental Protection and the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and exchange visits of the heads of the two agencies.

BELTA
27.06.2016

Belarus proposes to harmonize approaches to GMOs in Union State

Belarus proposes to harmonize approaches to GM food in the Union State, Vice Chairman of the Commission on Budget and Finance of the Parliament, Agrarian Policy of the House of Representatives Viktor Shchetsko said at the session of the Parliament Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union State in Minsk, BelTA has learned.

"It is time we made a decision in the Union State on genetic modification: is it good or bad?" he said.

Speaker of the State Duma, Chairman of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union State Sergei Naryshkin, for his part, urged to tread carefully here. "We need to think about the consequences that can happen in 10, 20, or 50 years, and bear in mind that there are now other modern, eco-friendly technologies to increase agricultural production," Sergei Naryshkin said.

Viktor Shchetsko also raised the topic of Belarus agricultural embargo that Russia imposed in 2014 stimulated to some extent an increase in deliveries to the Russian market. However, the fundamental redistribution of product niches did not happen. In general the structure of exports has remained at the level of 2014," he said.

"85% of Belarus' total exports of agricultural products and foodstuffs goes to Russia. However, Russia is stepping up investment in the agricultural industry, and Belarusian agricultural enterprises need to seriously restructure their work on the market of the neighboring country," Mr. Viktor Shchetsko said.

BELTA
10.06.2016

Belarus focuses on green economy approach

The principles of green economy are actively introduced in Belarus, head of the main department of the agro-industrial and forestry industries, environment of the Economy Ministry of Belarus Dmitry Matushevich said at the press conference "State Environmental Policy: Introduction of Green Economy Mechanisms", BelTA has learned.

According to Dmitry Matushevich, principles of green economy have entered into Belarus' national strategy of sustainable social and economic development through 2030. "Today they are viewed as an instrument to secure sustainable development and environmental security of the economy at the local level and the country. More countries are focusing on the expansion of resource-efficient and eco-friendly production industries," said Dmitry Matushevich.

The Economy Ministry proposes to set up sub-commissions jointly with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to assess every state program on compliance with the principles of the green economy.

BELTA
27.06.2016

EU provides €12m to facilitate Belarus' transition to green economy

The European Union has provided €12 million to facilitate Belarus' transition to a green economy, Belarusian First Deputy Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister Iya Maltkina said at a press conference on the state environmental policy and the application of green economy mechanisms, BelTA has learned.

"The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is currently working to implement several projects of international technical assistance financed by the European Union. The projects will help us establish guidelines and concrete steps for transition to a green economy," Iya Maltkina noted. Among the projects, the First Deputy Minister mentioned Technical Assistance to Support the Development of Green Economy in Belarus and Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus. "As part of the projects, we analyze the EU and national legislation in the field of green public procurement, ecotagling of products, organic farming, environmental innovations and ecosystem services," Iya Maltkina specified.

"The projects were launched in 2015, and we have already achieved tangible results. For example, we have purchased first electricity-powered sightseeing buses that will service tourist routes in Svetlyazhsky National Landscape Reserve and the Palace and Park Ensemble of the Radziwill family in Nesvizh. Besides, we have completed the construction of a nursery at Naliboksky Landscape Reserve to breed grousse for distribution to other reserves in Belarus and abroad. Moreover, an innovative project has been launched with the papermaker of Borisov to produce office paper from secondary resources," Iya Maltkina said.

The First Deputy Minister noted that a green initiatives contest for NGOs was held in Belarus in 2015. As many as 16 such initiatives are being implemented in the country today. They are aimed at the promotion of eco-tourism, biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of biological resources and waste management, utilization of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. These initiatives will help the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection choose the course of action and define priorities in the transition to a green economy. "Resources spent on the environment are not expenditures, but rather investments in the future," Iya Maltkina emphasized.

BELTA
24.06.2016

BELARUS, ARMENIA TO COOPERATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister Andrei Kovkhuto and Armenian Minister of Nature Protection Aramayis Grigoryan signed a memorandum on Belarus-Armenia cooperation in environmental protection, representatives of the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry told BelTA.

The bilateral meeting took place during the eighth ministerial conference Environment for Europe in Batumi, Georgia on 8 June.

Belarus and Armenia will cooperate in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, atmospheric air, protection, biodiversity protection for the sake of sustainable usage, economic mechanisms of sustainable nature management. The sides are also expected to work together in managing designated conservation areas, protected substances and waste, in creating nature reserves.

Apart from that, Belarus and Armenia will work together to revive lands violated by mining industry, to organize and execute state oversight over the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection, to use renewable sources of energy, and save energy.

During the opening ceremony of the ministerial conference Andrei Kovkhuto noted that international cooperation will allow improving the state of affairs in Europe and the world and that Belarus has adopted the policy of sustainable development taking into account the world's most important priorities.

BELTA
8.06.2016

Belarus proposes to harmonize approaches to GMOs in Union State
AT LEAST 10,000 ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN BELARUS BY 2025

Plans have been made to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Belarus and raise their total number up to at least 10,000 by 2025. The figures are stipulated by the program on developing the network of charging stations and electric-powered vehicles in Belarus. The document has been published on the website of the Belarusian Energetics Agency (SIDA), which is keen to implement ecological projects, is providing assistance to Belarus.

In late 2015 there were 27 registered electric-powered vehicles in Belarus. The draft program on developing the network of charging stations and electric-powered vehicles in Belarus till 2025 stipulates an optimistic scenario and a pessimistic one. The former expects that the number of electric cars in Belarus will grow close to 32,700 by 2025 while the latter expects the number of electric vehicles to be as low as 9,960. Expected electricity consumption per annum in 2016-2025 has been calculated taking into account the two previous scenarios.

Developers of the program believe that Belarus has sufficient industrial potential to make and assemble electric vehicles, electric traction motors, and batteries. A government policy is meant to encourage owners of electric vehicles the adoption of electric-powered vehicles will be slow. The possible incentives include preferential loans, state subsidies, forfeiture of customs duties and recycling fees, a lower transportation tax, and preferential electricity tariffs.

The draft program draws heavily from foreign experience and provides for building the infrastructure at homes, in public places, and at parking lots in industrial parks and free economic zones. The program is supposed to be implemented in 2016-2025. The program’s implementation is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and the consumption of fuel and energy resources in addition to fixing reduced electricity consumption at night. The program is expected to introduce $242.8 million in line with the optimistic scenario or $83.6 million in line with the pessimistic scenario. The program can be funded by direct investments and investments on terms of public private partnership.

Easily, silently, smoothly, the brand new electric-bus rolls through Nesvizh palace and park estate, drawing the eyes of passersby. Vladimir Drozdovich, who is both an electrician and the driver, it will be realised in the short possible time. But, soon, all guests will be able to take a ride. He notes, “The bus gives such a smooth and comfortable ride. It’s quite unusual and very different to a petrol bus. The bus has five stops on the route, with the bus travelling at 3km per hour, allowing tourists to enjoy passing sights.”

Veronika Artemieva: The battery can last 50-70km but drivers don’t let it run down completely. It takes 3-4 hours for the bus to re-charge, and main charging takes place at night.

The new transport is part of an international project—Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus, financed by the European Union and realised by the UNDP. The vehicle may look like entertainment but it’s actually providing safe and eco-friendly transport. The Deputy Chairman of the Nesvizh District Executive Committee, Mikhail Afanasieiev, explains that traditional transport emissions harm not only the city’s environment but its ancient heritage. He notes, “We’re restoring the ancient Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, with 16-18th century frescoes on its facades. These are the only such discoveries in Belarus, so we must protect them. We aim to create two sites outside the city, transporting tourists via eco-friendly transport. Every year, over 500,000 tourists come to our city — which is rather a burden. The project is ready and we’re now working on land allocation. If we find good investors (many are already demonstrating interest), we will be able to make the project a success.”

E-transport is both environmentally friendly and profitable, while ensuring independence from traditional types of fuel. Many countries are using it already, while, Belarus is now taking its first steps. Our railways are far more actively than cars, over 20 percent of lines now electrified. Belarus’ own production of e-buses and e-cars is in its infancy, with experimental samples, but two E433 e-buses (manufactured by Belkomunmash) will have joined Minsk’s streets by late 2016. Next year, another 18 are to be produced.

“It’s vital to shift to eco-friendly transport,” comments the Deputy General Director of the Scientific-Research Institute of Transport, Transtechnika, Dmitry Koval. He adds, “Around 70 percent of air pollution is the result of transport emissions; in large cities, this figure reaches up to 90 percent. However, new ecological transport virtually halves this.” There are ten buses using natural gas in Minsk, and they are also highly economic. “Methane costs are just 40 percent of those of diesel fuel, so running these ten buses has saved money. As regards prime costs, we want to ensure that these don’t exceed 5 percent of diesel transport costs.”

Our e-buses are still too expensive, although they would pay for themselves after 20 years. Sadly, their guarantee period lasts just ten years. Yevgeny Malchevsky, who heads the Innovative Policy Department at the State Committee on Science and Technology, agrees. “The world is quickly developing green transport and related infrastructure. Our e-buses and e-cars will find their place, as Iya Malkina, the First Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, agrees. “The world is quickly developing green transport and related infrastructure. Our e-buses and e-cars will find their place, as Iya Malkina, the First Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, agrees.”

Many Belarusian agencies and institutions are now working on developing green transport and related infrastructure. Our e-buses and e-cars will find their place, as Iya Malkina, the First Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, agrees. “The world is quickly developing green transport and related infrastructure. Our e-buses and e-cars will find their place, as Iya Malkina, the First Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, agrees.”

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is already, with the Nordic Investment Bank, financing the purchase of e-buses in Slonim and Baranovichi, as well as in Grodno and Brest. Equipment is financed by the European Union and realised by the UNDP. The program is already being implemented in Grodno and Brest. Equipment is financed by the European Union and realised by the UNDP. The program is already being implemented in Grodno and Brest. Equipment is financed by the European Union and realised by the UNDP.

The Belarusian Economy Ministry explains that water utility projects are being financed by the EBRD and the Nordic Investment Bank, with the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, which names the protection of Baltic Sea ecology as one of its goals. As work indirectly benefits the Baltic Sea, the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership is supporting the initiative, and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), which is keen to implement ecological projects, is providing assistance to Belarus.

The Economy Ministry is eager to implement more projects with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, covering new opportunities for Belarus–EBRD co-operation, including in the spheres of power engineering and transport.

Mr. Fomin underlines that Belarus’ socio-economic development and budgetary forecasts for 2016–2017 need account the US GDP growth, oil prices, and other factors the economy’s key indicators are expected to remain at the level of 2015—the rate of economic growth, salaries, and other macroeconomic factors affecting existing discount rates. The government is considering other possible incentives include preferential loans, state subsidies, forfeiture of customs duties and recycling fees, a lower transportation tax, and preferential electricity tariffs.

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The Minsk Times
1.06.2016

GATES OPEN WIDE TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Vladimir Khromov: By the end of 2016 an agreement should be signed to finance construction of waste-water treatment facilities in Orsha, Polotsk and Lida. The EBRD is already, with the Nordic Investment Bank, financing construction of waste-water treatment facilities in Vitebsk, Stolbtsy and Baranovichi, as well as in Grodno and Brest. Equipment is being purchased using EBRD loans.

The provision of financial stability for water services and an improved tariff policy are conditions of loans already signed between the EBRD and the leading Johansson, partment for Environmen- Velikie Tolyatti. Mr. Fomin underlines that Belarus’ socio-economic development and budgetary forecasts for 2016–2017 need account the US GDP growth, oil prices, and other factors the economy’s key indicators are expected to remain at the level of 2015—the rate of economic growth, salaries, and other macroeconomic factors affecting existing discount rates. The government is considering other possible incentives include preferential loans, state subsidies, forfeiture of customs duties and recycling fees, a lower transportation tax, and preferential electricity tariffs.

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BELARUSIAN ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION SUCCESSFUL

Belarusian polar explorers have successfully fulfilled all the tasks and the entire spectrum of scientific research, BelTA learned from Alexei Gaidashov, leader of the eighth Belarusian Antarctic expedition, on 10 June.

“This season our specialists have completed the intended operations to strengthen and develop the Belarusian Antarctic station. In particular, within a short time period and operating in difficult climatic conditions the team assembled the first three-section specialized module in the Mount Vostok area in Eastern Antarctic,” said Alexei Gaidashov.

According to the expedition’s leader, in the final stage of the program the Belarusian specialists had gathered scientific research branded in four of them. “We collected all inter-related information about geophysics, biology, and hydrobiology. Traditional meteorological and ozone-measuring measurements were taken. It is worth noting that samples and equipment stowed and delivered by Belarusian scientists and specialists,” stressed Alexei Gaidashov.

Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB) Vladimir Gusakov spoke in glowing terms about the performance of the eighth Belarusian Antarctic expedition. “Today following the old tradition we welcome and thank our fellow Belarusians upon their return from the polar expedition. A lot of materials were collected. They will be presented before a special commission. I think there will be enough things to do for a year — till the next expedition,” said the NASB head in his welcome address to the polar explorers.

Vladimir Gusakov underlined that a lot of attention is paid to Antarctic research in Belarus. “We are doing this for the sake of giving the Republic of Belarus the status of equal participant in the global effort aimed at studying and exploiting polar areas. Thanks to our polar explorers we can get unique materials and develop the most promising areas of scientific research,” said Vladimir Gusakov. “By the way, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus has already drafted a government program on monitoring polar areas of the Earth, creating the Belarusian Antarctic station, and enabling the operation of polar expeditions in 2016-2020. The establishment of a full-fledged station will allow Belarus to make another step forward and secure its stance in Antarctica by getting the status of a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty.”

Participants of the solemn meeting watched a video telling the story of the Belarusian polar expedition, the construction of the station, the everyday life and work of the polar explorers.

BELTA
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BELARUS-RUSSIA UNION STATE PLANS TO HOLD YEAR OF TOURISM

Plans have been made to declare a year of tourism in the Belarus-Russia Union State, Sergei Rybakov, Deputy Chairman of the Science, Education and Culture Committee of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, told reporters after the business session of the Belarus-Russia Forum of Regions on 7 June, BelTA has learned.

Tourism was in the spotlight during the session, which was no surprise. The tourism industries of Belarus and Russia and growing. Still, the potential for tourism development is definitely not exhausted. The region is also discussed by being fully exploited. “We should hold a joint event, let us say, Year of Tourism. It may be regional, and then we can move on to a national side, but the essence of such an event will be the same. We have to work and also the promotion of the existing tourism products and services in a legal framework and receive some of their development funds from the state. We therefore, can join our efforts to draw as many foreign tourists to Belarus and Russia as possible, including by developing domestic tourism,” Sergei Rybakov pointed out.

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BARK BEETLES INFIRGE ON THE SACRED

The Belovezhskaia Pushcha is among our national parks safe-guarded. Recent reports by Polish and Russian media about poaching on the Polish side of the Pushcha has included fatal footage on TVN24 Channel’s website, of foresters being attacked aggressively by journalist, even pouring water over their heads and trying to break their cameras.

Victor Ponomarev: March, the new Nature Management Policy has been doing its job of cutting almost three-fold, noting a need to eradicate bark beetles, which are destroying trees. Of course, nature recognizes no state borders, so should be worried about our Belarusian side of the Puscha.

The Deputy General Director for Scientific and Innovative Development at the National Academy of Sciences’ Scientific-Practical Center of the Forestry, Vadim Tsinkevich, tells us, “We know that the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, to control conditions. In cases of emergency, such as extreme activity by bark beetles, we follow the red alert — up to protect the forest. Some areas cannot be disturbed, with interference forbidden. As to whether the situation is critical, we believe it’s under control.”

The National Park’s chief forester, Vasily Filimonov, is the main specialist on bark beetles and tells us, he saw the Polish side with his own eyes, in early spring. There were beetles invading along the road and cutting areas, and I witnessed it being fully exploited. “We should hold a joint event, let us say, Year of Tourism. It may be regional, and then we can move on to a national side, but the essence of such an event will be the same. We have to work and also the promotion of the existing tourism products and services in a legal framework and receive some of their development funds from the state. We therefore, can join our efforts to draw as many foreign tourists to Belarus and Russia as possible, including by developing domestic tourism,” Sergei Rybakov pointed out.\n\nBELTA
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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR HERITAGE INTERPRETATION TO TRAIN GREEN GUIDES IN BELARUS

The European Association for Heritage Interpretation intends to arrange a training session for green tourism guides in Belarus, BelTA learned from Valeria Kitilsunova, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Russian public association Country Escape (Otdykh v derevne).

The training session was presented at the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve attended a conference of the European Association for Heritage Interpretation, which was conducted by Thorsten Ludwig, Managing Director of the European Association for Heritage Interpretation. “Heritage interpretation is an international form of tourism design and we hope to draw new professionals to work in this field,” Mr. Ludwig said.

Mr. Filimonov admits that Park employees have the necessary experience, which has been gained in practical activities. “The beetle menace is critical, we believe it’s under control,” he said.

The alarm seems to be called vain. The Belovezhskaia Pushcha is a powerful national park, which has seen and experienced such a crisis in the past. Let’s hope it’ll cope with its bark beetles.

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The photo shows the prototype of a Belarusian Antarctic module.

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The official believes that the main task for the near future is to address the lack of information about the opportunities for tourism in Belarus and Russia, because people abroad are little aware of them. “We have well-established routes and destinations such as extreme activity by bark beetles, we follow the red alert — up to protect the forest. Some areas cannot be disturbed, with interference forbidden. As to whether the situation is critical, we believe it’s under control.”

The National Park’s chief forester, Vasily Filimonov, is the main specialist on bark beetles and tells us, he saw the Polish side with his own eyes, in early spring. There were beetles invading along the road and cutting areas, and I witnessed it being fully exploited. “We should hold a joint event, let us say, Year of Tourism. It may be regional, and then we can move on to a national side, but the essence of such an event will be the same. We have to work and also the promotion of the existing tourism products and services in a legal framework and receive some of their development funds from the state. We therefore, can join our efforts to draw as many foreign tourists to Belarus and Russia as possible, including by developing domestic tourism,” Sergei Rybakov pointed out.

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The room contains materials prepared by the news agency correspondents BELTA, Belarus-Magazine, The Minsk Times.

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Many of us dream of exchanging urban living for the countryside life, splitting firewood instead of hitting the gym, riding horses and bathing in crystal clear lakes. Four years ago, the Maslovskies left Minsk, seeking a rural idyll. Our reporter went to their new home, to learn what inspired these modern, young people to quit the busy capital.

Yulia Popkova took me three and a half hours by inter-city bus, and another hour on a local bus, plus three kilometres on foot, to reach Yana and Alexander Maslovskis’ village of Polotsk. I realised immediately that the journey had been worthwhile. The air was full of sweet floral aromas, and my heart leapt at the beauty of the countryside. Saying this, I know that rural life isn’t for everyone.

“Our farmstead is relatively small: we keep hens, geese and goats, alongside six cats and four dogs,” says Yana, inviting me in. They also have four horses, the first being Kolos. She explains, “I was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too.

As a second-year student, Yana lived in the usual sort of flat, so she had to send her horse to the countryside. Her life changed in a moment: she had to wake up at 4am, go to see her horse, then go to university. She’d work afterwards, then return to see her ‘pet’ in the evening. “She’d return home at midnight, tired and happy,” Alexander recollects.

At first, he confesses, he was dumbfounded by his wife’s purchase. “Why would a city girl want a horse? Time passed, and we bought another, graceful Barkhat. Then, we acquired Rekord. I chose him, being charmed by his height,” says Alexander.

The move to the country was made quietly, without hesitation. Yana and Alexander settled in a picturesque, hilly area, set against the curve of beautiful Lake Beloe. “There are numerous springs,” says Yana, “And plenty of fish: crucian, tench, bream, pike, carp, perch and roach. The lake is famous for its ruff, which is found in only five of Belarus’ lakes.”

Living close to the water, the couple love to watch the elegant swans. Recently, they even saved one from death. “Last winter, fishermen brought us a bird with an injured wing, which would have frozen to death on the ice. We showed it to a vet and he set the wing. It lived with us for three months. As soon as the ice melted, we let it go on the water,” says Yana, watching a wintering goose. “Many of us dream of exchanging urban living for the countryside life, splitting firewood instead of hitting the gym, riding horses and bathing in crystal clear lakes. Four years ago, the Maslovskies left Minsk, seeking a rural idyll. Our reporter went to their new home, to learn what inspired these modern, young people to quit the busy capital.

They may seem strange but attitudes towards life in the countryside are changing, with ever more people wanting to move away from cities. “Famous businessman German Sterligov owned a mansion in Rublevskoye, facing the Kremlin, but relocated to an isolated farmstead without gas, electricity or paved roads, taking his wife and children with him,” adds that, just because they live in the countryside, it doesn’t mean that they’re giving up on the latest technologies.

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Perfect implementation of ‘green’ principles
Executive-Secretary of UNECE, Christian Bach, praises Belarus’ eco-social policy at Ecological Solutions Forum, during presentation of 3rd Environmental Performance Review

According to Mr. Bach, Belarus is an example to other states implementing ‘green’ principles. While commenting upon the Review, he named it as a ‘perfectly realised work.

All success is the result of long-term planning and commitment. Prime Minister Andrei Kobyaev comments. The Environmental Performance Review has been hosted by our country three times now, showing our interest in environmental issues. Mr. Kobyaev explains, “Ecological policy is a component of national security, so we take a careful attitude towards all resources and towards the harmonious development of the economy. This, alongside environmental preservation, is our chosen avenue of development.” He adds that the high status of the Review helps to enhance a country’s image within the world and to improve international ties. The objective assessment of foreign experts further aids development.

Belarus is realising several projects with support from foreign partners. A current UNDP programme covers nine ‘green’ projects, worth $27m. The Deputy Permanent Representative of the UNDP to Belarus, Yekaterina Paniklova, notes that these focus on sustainable social-economic development until 2016. She explains, “Our projects aim at developing such practices as the introduction of energy efficiency standards. We wish, in particular, to demonstrate second-generation buildings in three cities: Mogilev, Grodno and Minsk.”