

# PIECE OF NOTE : AMAZING STUDY VISIT TO THE HIDDEN GEM OF EUROPE, MINSK, BELARUS

By : Aryo Seno Bagaskoro

My name is Aryo Seno Bagaskoro, I am a junior high school student, I was born and raised in Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia after the capital, I am an Indonesian student and the opportunity that I get from Belarus was a great honor for me personally and I am sure it was another great step for further development of the education system and the warm relation between the two countries. The relation between Indonesia and Belarus.

## **Arrival Day, September, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 : Heartwarming First Meet**

The mission to Belarus starts with a journey. A long 20 hours journey from one face of the earth to the other side. It was a safe and fun flight after all. When I arrived at Minsk National Airport, I can see my host family, Nikita Danilov and his parents, Mr. Valerian and Mrs. Andjelica already waiting at the pick-up bay. It was heartwarming, remembering I already knew Nikita via Viber before. Without further do, we jumped up to their car and ride our way to Minsk downtown, where their apartment is located. On our way home, there are a lot of things we discussed about, especially about introducing the general view of the country and the city to me. Some facts that are quite surprising to me was that Minsk is call by the name the City of Heroes, they also have a tall monument in the middle of the city to commemorate and honor the fallen heroes of the country on World War II. What makes me amaze is that Surabaya, my home city also calls the City of Heroes, we also got a monument that is similar to the one in Minsk in order to honor the fallen heroes of Surabaya against the Dutch. Another fact that they told me was Belarus is located in the middle of Europe. The first impression of Minsk was already a great one. It is even more amazing when we arrived at the city. Even though it is still midnight, Minsk is still looks gorgeous and well-organized. As I arrived at the apartment, I unpack my suitcase, then take a good rest preparing for tomorrow. The view of the city outside my room's window made me even more excited to welcome a new day in Minsk.

## **First Day, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 : The Introduction Of The Stunning City**

As the sun starts to shine, I greet my first day in Minsk. I went to the kitchen to eat together with the Danilovs. Mrs. Andjelica then give me some bacon and cheese as well as some traditional Belarusian pancakes, called Draniki. We talked a lot about the food in Belarus either the food in Indonesia. After preparing a while, in the middle of the day, we are off to go to do our first schedule, which is excursion of Minsk city. First, Nikita and his mom brings me to the red church also known as Church of Saints Simon and Helena, Nikita told me that the church got the name because red represents the color of joy. Then we take some good shots around the Lenin Square (also known as Independence Square). Nikita also told me

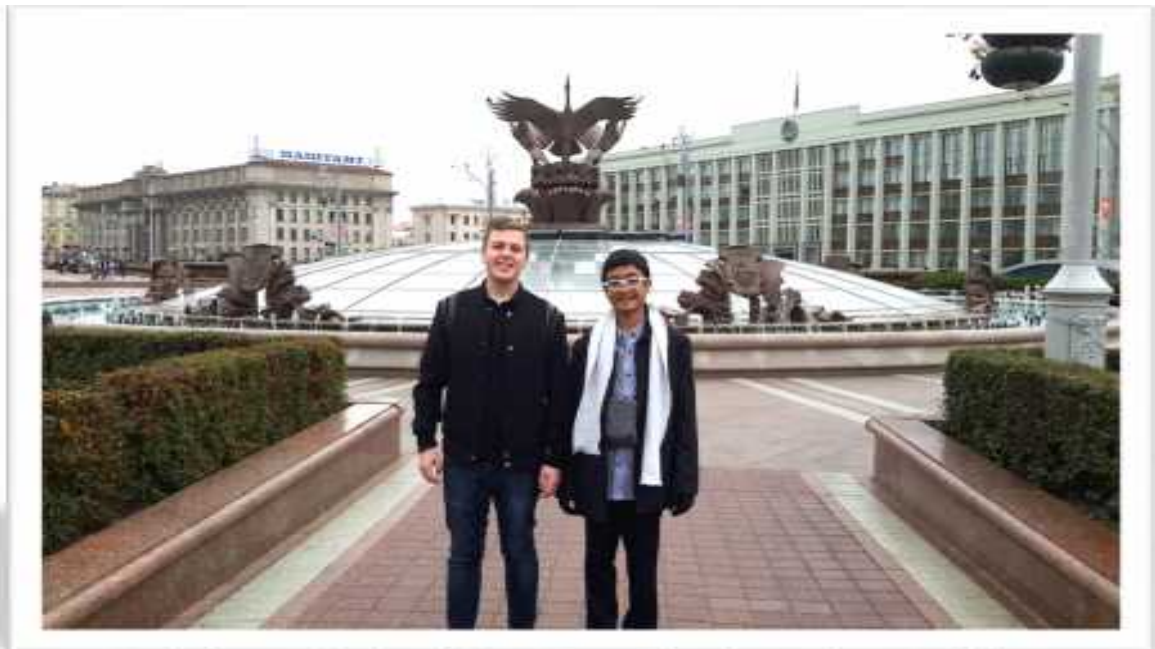
about the city government building near the Lenin Square. After a while, the rain starts to pour. We then take a walk back to our car to avoid bad weather. Nikita's mom told me that sometimes in the winter, in Minsk, it could even reach -25 degrees celcius. It is very different



Me and Nikita at Beautiful Red Church

from the weather in Indonesia, which is around 25-35 degrees celcius. We also only have two seasons here. After moving from Lenin Square, Nikita and his mom invites me to eat lunch together. We ate a lot of Belarusian dishes and meats there. They said it's a dish for welcoming me and to tighten the relationship between the two countries.

After the memorable moment, we then move to our next destination which is the Minsk city tour by bus. I learn a lot there about the city from the audio guide. The city structures, the city development, the people, everything is very well-organized. I also get a chance to take a look at the country landmark, which is Belarus National Library. It is looks like a diamond and the purpose outside of for the library purpose, is also to differentiate Belarus from other European countries. After the tour, we visit Zamok shopping mall for dinner, then head back home for a good night rest.



Us in front of Minsk City Executive Committee Building



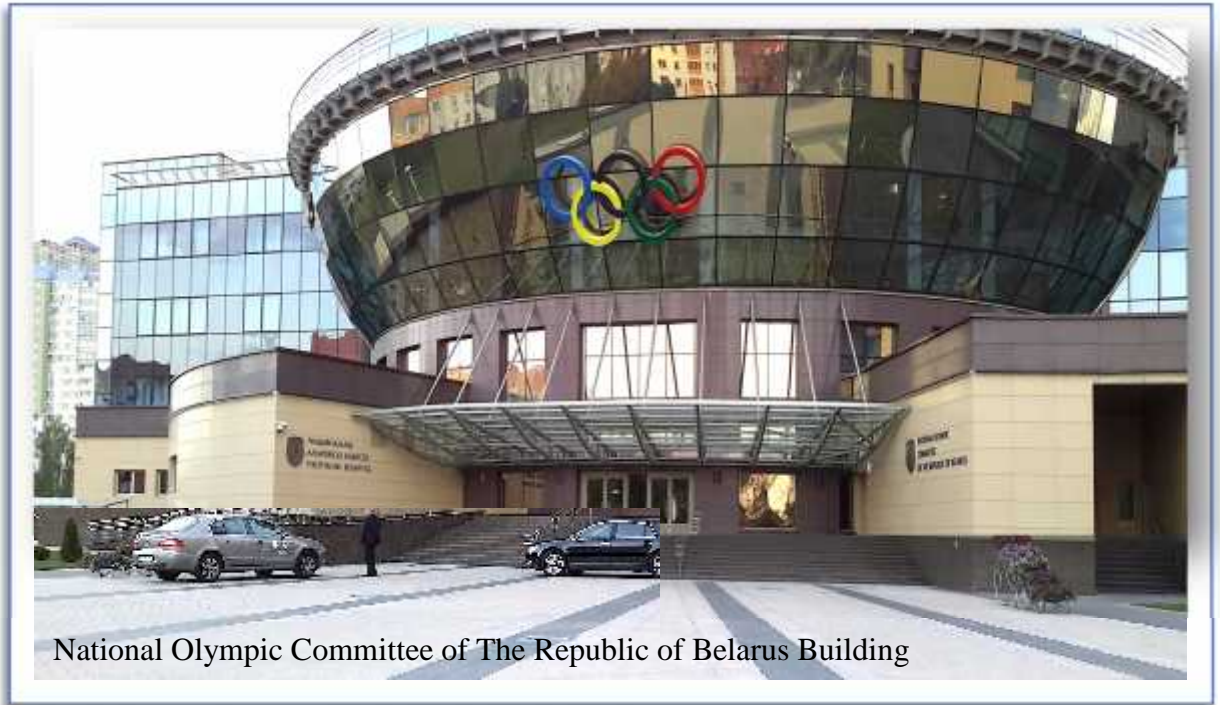
The Victory Hall Monument



Me at Lenin Square



Minsk, Amazing & Well-Organized City.



National Olympic Committee of The Republic of Belarus Building



Trade Union Palace of Culture at The Oktyabskaja Square

## Second Day, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 : The Introduction Of The Two Countries Culture, Education, The Environment, and Wildlife

The next day comes up. After preparing, we then off to visit some places again. At this day, we visited Gymnasium No. 24, which is Nikita's school. The education system in Indonesia and in Belarus is different. In Indonesia, between Elementary School, Junior High School, and Senior High School is separated by different buildings and internal structures. But in Belarus, I can see the three forms just fuse in one building and lead by the same headmaster



and the same structure. When I arrived at the school, the teachers are kindly welcomes me, at that time, I wore batik, which is Indonesia national clothing originated from Java Island. The cloth itself is very eye catching and unique, even more to the people who are not from Indonesia. After being welcomed by the headmaster, Mrs. Tatiana Viktorovna, they bring me to the school library to hear some presentations about the country and the school by several students. A few questions were flooded, followed by some discussions between me and them. After visiting the library, we're started the school tour. We take

a look to classes in different forms. There, I'm really amazed by the students. They are so enthusiastic on asking a lot of questions about Indonesia either about Indonesian daily life or sometimes even more advanced questions like about the systems in Indonesia. It was a great honor for me to introduce Indonesia there in Minsk. After the school tour, Nikita's mom picked us up back to their car. Now, we even got some companies from Nikita's friends. We then moving on to the next destination which is The Museum of The Great Patriotic War. Unfortunately the museum is closed on that day, so we had to look for another place, which is The National Museum of Belarus and The Wildlife Museum of Belarus. There, we take a look at some ancient Belarusian clothing, arts, daily objects even some weaponry from World War II. At the Wildlife Museum, we take a look at some wildlife of Belarus such as the Belarusian Bison and the stork, the national animal of Belarus, and also other animals around Belarus. After the visit, we take a dinner at a pizzeria, then head back home to the apartment. It was a great honor for me to introduce Indonesia in front of Belarusian students and teachers at that day.



**Third Day. September 22<sup>nd</sup>. 2015 : Interesting Discussion About Ecology, Science & Innovative Technologies.**

Once again, the sun shines through my room's window. Today, the breakfast is pretty different. Nikita's mom serve me some traditional Belarusian porridge made from oats. Belarusian usually eat it by adding a spoonful of sugar and blueberry jam. After preparing for a while, we then jumped to the car and preparing for today's visit. Today the schedule is to visit the Republican Center of Ecology and Local Lore Studies. Here, I was welcomed by the Center officials. We then had a tour around the Center to study about the environment, vegetation, and animals around the place. The facilities here are all free for public. There are a lot of schools who bring their students here to study and learn about the environment.



Me and Mr. Valeriy Paylovich, The Head of The Space Biology Center of The Republican Center of Ecology and Local Lore Studies

Sometimes even adults also visiting the facilities to learn or just look around and enjoy the green scenery. The facility has a greenhouse situated there to exhibit some tropical plants such as banana, sansiviera, aloe vera, palm tree, and many more. We even discuss about the functions of the plants and about the plants itself there remembering in Indonesia we got a lot of those kind of plants everywhere. After that we are heading to the animal section to look at some mammals, reptiles, and fishes. The next destination was space biology exhibition. Here I had a chance to discuss about the advancement of science and students achievement on the field of science and technology in Indonesia as well as in Belarus with Mr. Valeriy Paylovich, The Head of The Space Biology Center. After that, we are moving to the meeting room. There were some officials there, we had some discussion about Indonesia and Belarus there. The discussion was

pretty interesting. In the room we discuss a lot about the cultures and habits of the two countries there. After the discussion, we then leave the Republican Center to head back to the car to our next visit.



Student Visitors of The Facility



With the officials of The Republican Center of Ecology and Local Lore Studies

The next schedule is to visit the Republican Center for Innovative and Technical Creativity of Children and Youth. There, me and Nikita were welcomed by the Republican Center officials, then bring us to excurse the place. First, they show me the atomic energy exhibition.



It's said that in 2016, Belarus will have their own nuclear reactor after Russia, USA, and France. The reactor will also have some complex security system to prevent any damages occur to the reactor if there are some natural disasters happening. After the nuclear reactor exhibition, we moved on to the next exhibition, which is the astronomical section. At the exhibition, there are some interactive videos and

presentation about the outer space and also about the mankind achievements to explore the space over the years. After the exhibition, we then pay a visit to some rooms. Here, each rooms has its own functions. First room was a robot making room. There are a lot of people from the Republican Center who make different kinds of robots with different kinds of functions as well. At that time, some primary school teachers were there to learn making simple robots so they can teach their students how to make some. After the first room, we move to the next room, which is the place to make small vehicles prototype from woods and irons. There, the



official in

the room give me a challenge to solve some kind of simple engineer puzzle. Luckily, I could solve the puzzle pretty quick. After that, the next room was a room for making simple small cars with engine for racing. The Center itself already won some contests before. Then, it's time to go away. The officials gave us some goods and wave goodbye. It was such a great time there. We had back



to the apartment at the evening, then take a good rest before welcoming my fourth day in Minsk.

## Fourth Day, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 : A Great Nation Is A Nation That Respects Its Heroes

The fourth day arrives. Today the schedule is pretty interesting. We finally will have a chance to visit The Museum of The Great Patriotic War after it was closed before. After preparing



for a while, we then moving on to visit The Museum. The Great Patriotic War itself means the World War II that takes place in Belarus. While entering The Museum, the atmosphere itself was pretty sad and patriotic at the same time. As facts talking, approximately around 25% of Belarusian were murdered at The World War II. The museum itself got a lot of collections from The World War II. Old weaponry,

clothing, coins, propagandas, eventanks, planes, and artillery are being shown there. They also got a massive hall that contains the names of the heroes who are fallen in World War II. They call it The Victory Hall. Outside the museum, situated the tall monument that I was referring earlier as well as some statues about the war. The collections of the museum speaks for itself that war will never lead us to anywhere. After taking some pictures, we then head back to the car to our next visit.





Our next destination is The National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre of Republic of Belarus. In the inside of the massive building, the view got more epic. At the rooftop, there are a lot of pure gold placed everywhere there. They also put some traditional Belarusian clothing around the inside of the building. The show starts at around 19.00 PM. We then enter the theater and enjoy the show. The story was about Prince Igor journey when fighting against Khan Kozak army when The Rus (ancient Russia) was invaded by foreign tribe. The show was amazing and well-organized, it was an amazing night. After the show, we then head back to the apartment to have a good rest.



The History of Prince Igor

Traditional Clothes of the Nobles

## **Fifth Day, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 : Beautiful Traditional Art Performance**

My last effective day in Belarus is here. The fifth day arrives. Today, the schedule will be pretty tight. I will visit Gymnasium No. 24 again to do some presentations as well as going to The National Center of Children and Youth Art to perform traditional Surabaya Dance, The Remo Dance. We head first to Gymnasium No. 24. There, the students and teachers already prepared the library for my presentation. I showed my presentation to them about Indonesia advancement in the field of education, technology, also about the culture of Indonesia. I even had a chance to perform “tembang Pangkur” which is Javanese traditional poem. There were also a lot of questions flooded there, including about the governmental system, the education system, and even more advance questions from the brightest of Minsk students. It was an amazing opportunity to do a lot of discussions with them. After the presentation and discussions, the headmaster then gave me a book about Belarus entitled “Planet Belarus”. I also gave a wooden carvings which depicts traditional Indonesian art and folklore, “wayang” to the headmaster, Mrs. Tatiana. We then waved goodbye and gave each other presents.



It was a really nice moment for me. After saying farewell to the school, we then moving on to the next place, which is The National Center of Children and Youth Art. There, before starting the show, we had an excursion around the place. There are a lot of classes there. Each class containing different artworks by children and young people. After finishing the tour, it's my time to perform The Remo Dance that is being watched by approximately 50 visitors who looks so enthusiastic by the traditional dance from Indonesia. After the dance, we share each other presents. At night, me and Nikita's family had a farewell dinner before at the next day, I have to say farewell both to them and to the lovely country.



With Head, Officials and Student of The National Center of Children and Youth Art



Traditional Art Performance from Indonesia and Belarus



Farewell Dinner with My Lovely Host Family, Nikita Danilov & His Parents

**Day of Departure to The Homeland, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015 : Braided Friendship and Hope For The Sustainability Of The Relationship In Various Fields. Farewell Belarus!**

Eventually, I had to say goodbye to Belarus. The last day had finally come. After a warm goodbye and a lot of hugs, I had to go. Nikita and his mom drives me to the Minsk National Airport. We then say farewell to each other with a hope will meet again at the future as the successor of the two countries. At last, I hope the relation between the two countries will not stop here. I hope there will be a lot of people from Indonesia visit Belarus and either the other way around so then we can learn a lot from the country from the other part of the earth. Finally, I would like to say thank you to Belarus, to all the people who contribute in the program, as well to Nikita Danilov and his parents, Mr. Valerian and Mrs. Andjelica who had been an outstanding host family while I'm visiting Belarus, the hidden gem of East Europe.

Thank you very much. Terima Kasih. Bal'Shoe Spasibo Belarus, Dasvidania !

