

# Always a place available for precious reserves

Belarus' gold and currency reserves have risen 4.5-fold over last five years

By Vitaly Vasiliev

According to data from the end of 2010, the country's gold and currency reserves have reached a historical record of \$6.78bn by national calculations (\$5.7bn using the IMF method). Within five years, these should reach \$12bn, enabling Belarus to achieve a world standard, with our gold and currency reserves equalling at least three months of our imports in value. The figure is vital to the country's security.

In 2006, President Lukashenko was photographed next to pyramids of gold bullions (reaching half of human height) at the National Bank's central depository. In De-

cember 2010, Alexander Lukashenko and Piotr Prokopovich, the Chairman of the National Bank's Board, inspected the site again. The deposits of gold almost reached the ceiling. In five years' time, a new room will surely be needed.

Mr. Prokopovich noted that Belarus is ranked 46th worldwide and 3rd among the CIS states (after Russia and Kazakhstan) in terms of its gold reserves — 30.6 tonnes. Precious metals account for 25 percent of our basket of reserves, with the remaining assets placed in eight foreign currencies in first-rate American and European banks.

Speaking about plans for the banking system for the next five

years, Mr. Prokopovich noted that achieving the necessary amount of gold and currency reserves will enable us to enhance the country's credit rating. In turn, this will reduce the cost of foreign loans for Belarusian banks while increasing the inflow of direct foreign investments.

According to Mr. Prokopovich, the country should achieve a positive balance of foreign trade in coming years (to date, this figure has been chronically negative). Mr. Prokopovich believes that agreements relating to the formation of the Single Economic Space, signed by Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, should contribute to this. The most vital task for the next five years

will be making the Belarusian Rouble a freely convertible currency — a goal which Mr. Prokopovich believes can be fulfilled.

Mr. Lukashenko noted that, if the banking system reaches its targets, 'we'll forget talks about problems.' According to the Belarusian President, the fulfilment of ambitious plans is within our grasp, since the Belarusian economy demonstrated good results even during the crisis.

During the meeting at the National Bank, Mr. Lukashenko focused attention on stability being reached in Belarus, noting that it enables us to hope 'that major finan-



Gold reserve

cial players could place reserves in our country.' "People will bring their money to our country and keep it here while opening companies and accounts," explained the President.

"Money likes silence. As soon as disputes begin within the state, money starts disappearing. We've long been valued for our ability to preserve calm; this is essential and, if it continues, will ensure good prospects. We're able to do this," Mr. Lukashenko asserted.

## Stadler fulfils order

Swiss company assembles first electrical city train for Belarus, to begin operating in 2011 between Minsk-Passazhirsky and Zhdanovichi

Belarusian Railways is visiting Switzerland to inspect and accept the first electrical city train, designed for a new format of passenger transportation. In late January, the electric city train will arrive in Belarus for pre-operational tests. "In the late third and early fourth quarter of 2011, it will begin serving the Minsk-Zhdanovichi route. In future, the route may be extended to Zaslavl," notes the press service of Belarusian Railways. In late winter and early spring, the second and third Swiss electrical trains will arrive in Belarus, with Stadler supplying ten contemporary electrical trains in all, each costing around 6m Euros. These will connect the Belarusian capital with its satellite towns.

## New course for Vetraz

Unique Italian designer dishware soon to appear at Begoml plant

The Director of Begoml's Vetraz Plant, Anatoly Sivko, tells us that a protocol has been signed to create joint manufacture with the Italian company to produce kitchen dishware: saucepans and frying pans. Designer solutions and anti-stick coatings should allow the goods to find a reliable niche on the market. "According to preliminary estimates, we'll be able to manufacture up to 200,000 units monthly, initially for export alone. In future, these will be available for sale in Belarus," notes Mr. Sivko. "We'll be taking on new staff, allowing us to double or triple output."

Around 3m Euros is to be invested into the project, which is unique for the Vitebsk Region, with half of the cost paid for by Italian partners.

## Aiding entrepreneurial activity

Minsk authorities ready to grant certain privileges to private manufacturers

By Vyacheslav Lugovoy

At present, over 33,000 companies and 52,000+ individual entrepreneurs are working in Minsk. Such private business is responsible for a quarter of tax payments into the capital's budget. However, the city authorities believe that this contribution could be increased, if the

state responds appropriately to businessmen's needs.

"There are about 3,400 private manufacturing companies in Minsk: 10 percent of the total number," notes the Head of Entrepreneurship on Minsk City Executive Committee's Economic Committee, Alexander Kalinovsky. "Of course, this figure is not large; over half of all

businessmen focus on trade and public catering."

Not long ago, district administrations asked heads of private industrial enterprises to complete forms, indicating which production facilities, land and loans their organisations needed. "We asked what help district and city authorities might render, to aid the raising

of industrial production volumes and export deliveries," explains Mr. Kalinovsky.

Over a hundred companies expressed a desire for land, to either rent or buy. Having analysed the possibilities, Minsk City Executive Committee admitted that it cannot allocate a requested 100 hectares near the ring-road. However, the Minsk Region is ready to help, with Minsk City Executive Committee's Internet site having a form to download regarding land allocation (in the 'Entrepreneurship' section).

"Additionally, our site provides information on companies' equal participation in building annexes to residential houses. This could be of interest to those providing services, trade and public catering. It enables this sector to realise investment projects," adds Mr. Kalinovsky.

This year, Minsk City Executive Committee is to focus on developing support for small businesses — primarily, establishing business incubators. 18 similar sites already operate in Minsk, including three small business incubators. City authorities aim to open an incubator for the youth social service in each district in 2011, which will aid employment for the under 31s while teaching business processes. A production incubator is also to be launched in each city district, housed inside empty facilities.



Privately owned firms ready to seriously increase industrial production volumes and export deliveries

## Global level of scientific research

By Dmitry Pimenov

Joint projects by scientists from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova have been worthily assessed by a jury, at a contest organised by the National Academies of Sciences of our three states

According to the terms of the International Association of Academies of Sciences, the event is organ-

ised in rotation by Kiev, Minsk and Chisinau. This time, the Moldovans took the honour of summing up the results and determining the ultimate winners. Among those recognised were the authors of a joint microelectronics project in the sphere of natural sciences. In the area of technical sciences, the jury recognised researchers who have solved complex problems relating to the utilisation of thermal pollutants in power

engineering and public service. Those investigating problems of sustainable development for national innovative systems won the contest among humanitarians. Diplomas and awards were bestowed upon Belarusian members of joint projects at a solemn ceremony at the National Academy of Sciences.

The winners of the contest, first organised by the National Academy of Sciences in 2010, were named,

including those working in foundry engineering, the diagnosis of immune diseases among children and the synthesis of nano-materials.

The most prestigious scientific nomination is probably 'The Most Quoted Authors'. It's pleasant that there were many nominees in this area, with the contest showing that the level of research being conducted at leading domestic scientific centres meets global standards.