

# Key problems draw fire

By Irina Yemelyanova

## Government discusses strategy for H2 at Council of Ministers' sitting

Many topical proposals have been discussed, making it clear that no more empty-headed privileges, credits, subsidies or other state injections will be allocated to different programmes and projects. Much money has been printed which is not actually earned and is simply inspiring inflation. Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich did not flinch from stressing that certain projects have been paid for with state funds with little return. This year, some regions have launched construction without sufficient financing, probably hoping that state funds will be forthcoming, regardless of efficien-

cy. In fact, every third borrower is defaulting on their loan — with nobody bearing responsibility. The PM has promised to introduce responsibility, while conducting a pre-scheduled staff certification.

Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Rumas notes that, in the second half of the year, domestic consumption should fall, with its structure changing: less TV sets are likely to be sold but more products. With this in mind, industrial enterprises should enhance exports, avoiding excessive warehousing, with the construction branch having the same targets. Contractors now primarily need to complete near-ready sites. The Government is convinced that, if company heads demonstrate deftness, sales markets can easily be found — as export conditions are currently favour-

able. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister has warned that 'this won't last forever, so sluggishness is inadmissible.'

The problem of investments was tackled very seriously, without any 'slogans'; to be more correct, the lack of injections was in focus. Of today's \$750m of direct foreign investments, 70 percent are foreign company profits, which are yet to be taken away by investors. Attracted investments stand at just 11 percent, with the private sector accounting for 92 percent of this. As regards state companies, Mr. Rumas stresses that, over the past two years, only one investment agreement has been signed by the Industry Ministry.

The heads of Government also focused on foreign currency, which cannot be bought freely by citizens, re-



Serious topics discussed at House of Government

sulting in 'grey' schemes. Secondly, the plurality of exchange rates is encouraging enterprises to hold export revenue abroad, as they don't wish to sell it at the National Bank's exchange rate. Alternatively, they convert it into a foreign currency not subject to obligatory sale. During the sitting, it was decided to put an end to this...

In the second half of 2011, the Government plans to focus on exports,

inflation and investments. Meanwhile, as Mr. Myasnikovich noted, people's problems remain key. "Whatever tasks we might solve, please remember that people's standard of living is of primary importance. Our work must be guided by this. In 2011, citizens' real incomes should be no lower than last year," the Prime Minister added.

Everyone agrees but action is required...



Several schools to launch experiment in September, replacing traditional textbooks with electronic versions

# Book readers, netbooks and other modern devices useful for schoolchildren

From September 1st, an experiment is being launched at eight schools and gymnasiums, with electronic display boards replacing weighty piles of textbooks, freeing pupils from heavy knapsacks and bags

By Yekaterina Malysheva

Will the innovation prove popular? According to specialists, book readers, netbooks and other useful devices can be partially funded from the money usually set aside for printed textbooks, with them easily paying for themselves over the course of the time.

Pupils aged 15-16 years from the BSU Lyceum are to be the first to pilot the project, which is being introduced for a two year period. Of course, most will already be

familiar with the technology, and will easily be able to download information. The search facility of the software makes finding relevant pages simple — even quicker than turning the pages of a book. Some wonder how 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade pupils at Novopolotsk's state general education gymnasium will get on with their netbooks but Anna Novikova, a teacher of history and the gymnasium's curriculum secretary, sees no problems from a technical point of view.

"They will certainly understand how to download literature, together with their parents," she notes. "Already, many have computers at home and our 2nd and 3rd grade pupils have also attended computer classes this year. However, we'll soon see from the experiment whether these devices can completely replace books."

Yuri Gladkov, the Head of the Education Ministry's Department for General Secondary Education, underlines that it's vital to gain feedback from parents, teachers

and pupils before launching these devices countrywide. The convenience must be taken into consideration, as must the wisdom of giving younger children expensive hardware. Some wonder whether the monitors might strain their eyes. If all goes well, the complete amount of budget funding needed will be calculated, to give every pupil equal access to electronic display boards and netbooks. If these devices were bought immediately, a million would be needed for schoolchildren alone.

## Vivid and expressive historical legacy

### Brest worthily celebrates its 992nd birthday

Pedestrian Sovetskaya Street became a large exhibition and concert site, with thousands of city residents and guests coming to celebrate Brest's birthday. The lack of sunshine and a sudden downpour of rain couldn't dampen spirits at the festivities, which were opened by the Chairman of the Brest City Executive Committee, Alexander Palyshenkov.

He reminded those present of the city's ancient status, as Brest was first officially mentioned in chronicles in 1019 — being known as Berestie. The city has experienced many landmark events, founding the first Belarusian printing house (releasing the famous Brest Bible) and boasting the first mint. Brest was also the first among Belarusian cities to receive the Magdeburg Right, enabling it to enjoy progressive autonomy. In Berestie, cousins Vytautas and Jagailo prepared for their decisive battle against German knights near Grunewald, in the early 15th century; Brest's warriors contributed to their future victory.



Modern Brest

The Brest Unia and the Brest Peace Treaty were signed in the city and, in June 1941, Brest Fortress defenders bravely stood against the Fascist invaders.

Brest's post-war years were also remarkable, with grand construction to create open vistas, wide avenues and welcoming parks.