

Moving towards ultimate goal

New Prime Minister approved by National Assembly and President Alexander Lukashenko sets goals for the Government, commenting upon topical issues of domestic and foreign policy

By Vladimir Vasiliev

Mikhail Myasnikovich was appointed Prime Minister in late 2010 — by Presidential Decree — but, in line with the Constitution, each new head of government must be approved by the legislative power. Accordingly, a special session has been held, at which the deputies unanimously supported Mr. Myasnikovich's appointment.

The Government's new goals seem traditional, focusing on enhanced energy efficiency and reduced use of materials, the attraction of foreign investments and the creation of convenient terms for businesses. Farming efficiency and import substitution are other key targets. However, the President's speech included some new accents, encompassing the structural reform of the economy. Extensive modernisation of existing facilities and the launch of new, highly-technological plants and, even, whole new branches are planned. In this context, the President spoke of state companies which are currently running at a loss. "If these lack a feasible economic future, why should we continue supporting them, burying our financial resources?" said Mr. Lukashenko, adding, "We must only support effective projects or those which are of special social significance."

The Government is to 'revive' the economy, with



President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko delivers speech at 7th special session of National Assembly's House of Representatives

the President giving permission for radical measures regarding chronically uncompetitive and loss making factories: including their privatisation and liquidation. He warned, "Staff of these liquidated companies should not suffer." Their re-employment is to be ensured by the Government and local authorities. Mr. Lukashenko demanded, "Problems shouldn't be resolved at the expense of the population."

On addressing the National Assembly, the Head of State noted that he wished to speak not only about the economy but, primarily, to express his view on recent political events. Mr. Lukash-

enko thanked the deputies for their support during the recent election campaign and shared his own perspective on the events happened during it. He said, "You may be confident that, on December 19th, the opposition was preparing a coup — no more or less. Everything was planned at the strict behest of some foreign special services." The President stressed that his assertion is based on facts, some of which have already been published in the printed media.

According to the President's assessment, the forces of law and order behaved in an appropriate fashion on December 19th, 'within the

law, as any responsible power would do: rigidly and decisively'. Criminal proceedings via the courts will follow. "As is natural for any legal state," the President stressed.

Commenting on the West's reaction and, in particular, the threat of visa sanctions on the Belarusian leadership, Mr. Lukashenko asserted that these are 'pin-pricks' and that no one will ever bring the country to its knees. According to the President, mass media reports of the country being at a 'dead end' after December 19th are groundless. "We've come to no dead end. We've overcome another barrier, while building our independence

and sovereignty. Each state had its own difficulties," he emphasised, adding, "I don't wish to see bloodshed in the country. If the nation had a different approach, it would have elected another President. Meanwhile, our people clearly believe that the situation should be as it is. We must protect our country at all costs." Mr. Lukashenko believes that impunity could inspire further criminal acts.

Simultaneously, the President stressed that his tough position does not mean that Minsk has closed its doors on dialogue. On the contrary, the Belarusian leadership is ready to listen to sensible

ideas from the USA and the European Union. Mr. Lukashenko added, "Speak and make suggestions, but act honestly." He noted the journalistic trend to comment that 'Belarus will go nowhere without Russia'. "We have never wished to escape the West or Russia," said the President. "This is our fate: to be a connecting bridge. We'll continue conducting this policy." He believes such a policy serves national interests, rather than feeding a game between the giants of Russia and the EU. The President summed up by saying that, despite all difficulties, 'we should see our goal and move towards it'.

Increased speed and comfort

By Yuri Rakebanov

Standard of Minsk-Mogilev motorway soon to rival that from Munich to Bremen

In two years' time, the Minsk-Mogilev (M-4) and Minsk-Gomel (M-5/E271) motorways should resemble the high-speed autobahns of Germany. The President of Belarus has signed a decree to reconstruct the roads, which are of strategic importance, connecting the country's centre with its regional cities. The M-5/E271 links Belarus with the Baltic and



Route becoming more convenient

Black sea coasts. Naturally, the roads are to be reconstructed to meet European standards, using the most advanced technologies.

Drivers have already seen the M-4 expanded to

four lanes, stretching from Minsk to Cherven. "In total, we've reconstructed 160km, with another 319km remaining," explains Alexey Pekun, the Press Secretary for Belavtodor (Ministry for

Transport and Communications). "Initially, we planned to complete work by 2014 but the deadline has been brought forward and, no doubt, we'll succeed. Decree #28 envisages construction simultaneously with design and estimate documentation. Moreover, the Ministry is being allowed to choose its contractors without the need for holding a tender. On completion, the Minsk-Mogilev and Minsk-Gomel routes will offer four lanes each, significantly raising their capacity and ensuring more comfortable journeys."

Most travellers on business trips

Belarus sees rising tourist service exports to such countries as Qatar and Switzerland

Tourist services being rendered to those from Bahrain, the UAE, Israel and China have risen in value,

although Russia still leads, followed by Turkey, the UK, Germany and Ukraine.

According to Valery Boldyrev, the Head of the National Tourism Agency's Department for Marketing and Publishing Activity, the

increasing number of tourists from Qatar, Switzerland and Bahrain is due to the improving investment attractiveness of the Republic. "We are mostly seeing people on business trips, rather than travelling for pleasure,"

he notes.

In 2010, Belarus was visited by 4.1m foreigners — for business and tourist purposes: up almost 20 percent on 2009. Over 102,000 tourists visited our country via tourist agencies.