

Solidarity in fight against violence

Belarus and Russia counteracting global terrorism, which kills innocent people and threatens international legitimacy and the domestic stability of states

Issues of combating crime, including terrorism, are receiving special attention as part of bilateral collaboration between Belarus and Russia. At present, our two states' justice ministries are analysing legislation to bat-

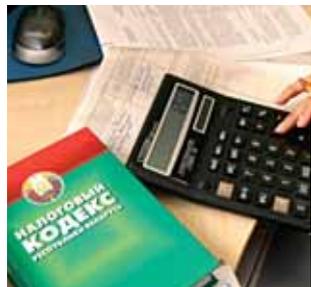
tle terrorism, bringing definite recommendations for harmonisation.

Belarus is making its own contribution to formalising global anti-terrorist strategy, uniting states in their battle against terrorism. Belarus is associating with the international community, trying to ensure efficient legislation for combating terrorism. Besides developing national legislation, our country is taking part in all universal anti-terrorist international treaties.

Profitable rates of tax reduction

By Vladimir Vasiliev

Ministry for Taxes and Duties shares interesting information



Last year, income tax payments into the budget rose by over Br1 trillion (over \$300m); according to the Ministry for Taxes and Duties, this shows that people's income has grown and that more earnings are being declared. As well as strict controls on 'cash salaries' (paid illegally, avoiding taxation) certain economic instruments can be used, which may cost less. The transition to a 12 percent flat scale of income tax has become a good impetus to leave 'shadow'.

Previously, income tax was calculated in line with a

five-stage progressive scale: 9, 15, 20, 25 and 30 percent. The higher one's income, the more tax paid. Not everyone loved the idea of a 12 percent scale, but arguments in favour prevailed.

The Finance Ministry and the Ministry for Taxes and Duties plan to continue reducing the tax burden, simplifying accounting and cutting profit tax. At a recent session of the Finance Ministry, Minister Andrei Kharkovets explained the plans, noting that the current 24 percent rate is due to fall to 20-22 percent in 2012. This should make Belarus more attractive to business circles and the tax may even be abolished where funds are 'aimed at the establishment and modernisation of acting facilities — until expenditure is recouped'.

The Finance Ministry stresses that reducing existing taxes won't lead to new ones being launched. "No new taxes are planned in Belarus," Mr. Kharkovets has promised. Business circles are sure to be pleased.



PM Mikhail Myasnikovich discusses prospects for largest enterprises' development with industrialists

Powers subject to extensive changes

Deputy prime ministers and ministers join parliamentarians to discuss Government's programme of activity for coming five years

By Yevgenia Morozova

The First Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Semashko, believes that investments, innovations and the achievement of a positive balance in foreign trade are vital tasks. To meet them, many enterprises are to undergo modernisation. A new line of MAZ vehicles is to appear, in addition to Gomselmash's highly efficient combines and modern white goods. Oil processing depth is to reach 93 percent while hundreds of new fa-

cilities are to be built, including a bleached pulp factory and those processing oil shale and brown coal. Some deposits need further development and the Government is hopeful that work will progress quickly with the aid of investment.

According to Mr. Semashko, our domestic oil processing plants are receiving less volume from Russia than planned; intense talks on the issue continue. With this in mind, alternative supplies are being sought.

In 2016, the first block of the Belarusian nuclear power station will become operational.

From now on, housing maintenance and utilities are to be supervised by the Construction and Architecture Ministry (with the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services becoming its department). Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Kalinin notes that the Government has abolished the idea of residents of 'more comfortable' accommodation paying for communal serv-

ices in full. "I propose to implement a two-rate tariff to distinguish ordinary service (fixed price) from deluxe service (requiring an additional payment)," he explains.

Other ministries are also to be reformed, losing their involvement in economic activity. Powers are to focus on the development of normative documents, price policy and branch strategy.

After debate, the new state programme will be finalised and sent to Parliament for approval.

Mission ends its mandate

Belarus is an active member of the OSCE and plans to enhance co-operation

By Igor Slavinsky

Not long ago, Astana hosted the OSCE Summit, where Alexander Lukashenko shared his vision for developing this trans-Atlantic community of nations. Behind the scenes of that Kazakh meeting, talks took place between Belarus' Foreign Minister, Sergei Martynov, and the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. Recently, Minsk hosted a press conference of the OSCE's American representative, Ian Kelly, who said, "We believe Belarus occupies a very important place in Europe. It should continue participating in our Permanent Council meetings and in our programmes. We don't wish it to be isolated."

The OSCE headquarters is in Vienna, not far from Minsk; in fact, flights run twice daily. However, for Minsk and Vienna to remain in contact, there's no need to send diplomats on business trips. Mr. Kelly actually spoke to Belarusian journalists via a TV bridge. Nevertheless, despite the supremacy of modern telecommunications, the American diplomat is certain that Minsk would benefit from having its own OSCE office.

For many years, the mission operated in Belarus but, in late December 2010, our Foreign Ministry decided that it had fulfilled its mandate. Similar missions in Latvia and Georgia were recently closed for the same reason. Belarus has thanked

Minsk's OSCE office for its joint projects (much has been achieved in recent years) but has failed to prolong its mandate for another year. "This won't lead to our country reducing interaction with the OSCE. On the contrary, we're ready to strengthen and enhance our practical interaction with OSCE institutions," noted the Foreign Ministry's Press Secretary, Andrei Savinykh, at the press conference, confirming that this decision is final and not subject to discussion.

Mr. Kelly moved to Vienna from Washington (where he worked as the Spokesperson for the US Department of State) to take on his diplomatic post. He several times stressed in Russian that he 'believes in

the European future of Belorussia'; he admitted that he began learning Russian three decades ago (so has perhaps decided not to re-learn the name of our country). "We wish the Belarusian Government to see advantages from joining European institutions," he said, adding that all OSCE participants take on certain obligations — such as ensuring freedom of speech and meetings. "The OSCE does not apply economic sanctions, being established to support contacts. We don't have an army or courts, but have the power of dialogue," Mr. Kelly noted. He mentioned the mutually respectful dialogue which he is conducting with Belarusian Alexander Sychev, in Vienna.

