

Systematic solution of social issue

School Bus project to completely solve problem of transportation of rural children to school within five years

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has accepted a report from Sergey Rumas, the Chairman of the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus.

The President has been informed about the Development Bank's performance, and efforts to finance Government programmes and to take over assets from state-run banks. Mr. Lukashenko was keen to hear how far Mr. Rumas has fulfilled his targets since his appointment to his position.

The Head of State drew special attention to the Development Bank's social responsibility as a profitable organisation;

it stands at the heart of state project financing, helping fund the modernisation which will take Belarus into the 21st century. The Development Bank may be 'young' but Mr. Lukashenko is adamant that it should begin as it intends to go on, as he emphasised to Mr. Rumas.

Mr. Lukashenko underlines that every major organisation in Belarus should be carrying out social projects. Accordingly, he has instructed the Development Bank to go ahead with the *School Bus* project; this will set up transport for children to and from rural schools within the next five years. This year, the Development Bank is to finance

the purchase of 60 buses (ten per region), including arranging bus driver training. Mr. Lukashenko approves of women being hired for the job, rather than men, to aid their employment in rural areas and to better ensure the safety of children. Unemployment among women is of particular concern in remote districts.

By the end of the year, yellow buses made by Minsk Automobile Plant will be delivering children from remote villages to their schools in agro-towns. Small schools are being closed, since children are obliged to receive lessons in mixed age and ability groups. Many argue that

this reduces the quality of delivery by teachers and pupils' understanding. Larger schools can offer better resources and more age specific teaching. Of course, the problem of transport has previously been an obstacle to this move, so the five year plan is afoot, via the *School Bus* programme.

Regional budgets are already being used, with support from local enterprises, to arrange buses, but there is not yet a unified approach of equal access to transportation. The Development Bank's involvement will make the project more rational.

The operation of the Eur-

sian Economic Commission was also tackled during the meeting. According to Mr. Rumas, who is a member of the EEC Council, representing Belarus, work on future integration is almost complete. The EEC

Council is next to meet on April 21st, after which proposals are to be forwarded to the governments of the three member countries. Co-ordinated proposals will then be presented to the heads of state at the Supreme



Eurasian Economic Council session, on May 29th. Mr. Lukashenko has approved the initiative proposals of Belarus and urges that work on the Eurasian Economic Union treaty be accelerated.

Improving vision with new satellite

By Yury Chernyakovich

'While our spaceships furrow the universe...' is the well-known phrase from the film by director Leonid Gaidai. Residents of the USSR had every right to say so; in 1965, when the famous comedy was released, the Soviet Union led space exploration. By that time, it had been eight years since Soviet scientists had launched the first artificial satellite and four years since Yury Gagarin had been sent into space. It was also one year since a manned spacecraft had been launched into orbit and, in 1965, Leonid Leonov performed his 'space-walk'.

Belarusians were also involved in the Soviet space programme and, then, took part in the Russian programme. Various domestic enterprises are masters of optical devices and solar cells — used for orbital space stations. In Soviet times, two of our countrymen — Piotr Klimuk and Vladimir Kovalenok — took part in three space missions. At the end of October last year, the third native of Belarus flew into space: Russian cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky, who was born in the town of Cherven, in the Minsk Region. He returned recently, in mid-March.

At the end of July 2012, Baikonur cosmodrome launched a Russian rocket, carrying twin satellites: one was the first Belarusian spacecraft. At a recent press conference, in Minsk, devoted to World Cosmonautics Day, journalists were told that our satellite is orbiting at about 500km above the Earth — visible to the naked eye. Its task is to photograph the planet's surface, transmitting data to a terrestrial control centre located in Belarus. The shots are invaluable to our forestry and agricultural ministries, helping predict harvests (using the electromagnetic



Specialists working on new optics to better view Earth

radiation spectrum). They're also useful to the Emergency Situations Ministry, foreseeing floods and dry season fires. The Belarusian satellite is currently working in tandem with the Russian satellite, raising efficiency by doubling the number of images available to both our countries.

Of course, technical characteristics are being ever improved, with scientists continually working on the next generation of satellite, to remain competitive. With the same size and weight, definition is being improved, allowing vision to one metre (rather than the current two). The next satellite to be launched

is a joint project by Belarusian and Russian scientists. At the press-conference in Minsk, the Chief Designer of the Belarusian Space System for Remote Earth Sensing, Sergey Zolotoy, noted that the governments of our two countries are discussing expanding the orbital group of satellites. If all goes well then, besides the existing two satellites, another Belarusian and two Russian satellites will be launched. A feasibility study is underway. He notes that five satellites is the optimal number, ensuring systematic monitoring of the surface of our planet.

"Most of our ministries have placed orders for images, which

we'll be able to meet," explains Mr. Zolotoy. Other countries are also interested in using the data, with negotiations ongoing regarding the purchase of images. The Russian Federal Space Agency is speaking to a number of European firms and has plans to co-operate with Cuba, Venezuela and countries in South-East Asia. Clearly, funds invested in the national space programme are paying dividends.

A new national space programme for the next five years has been developed. Besides the launch of another satellite for remote Earth sensing, a mini-satellite is planned, as well as a communication satellite.

Candles of memory burn long

Two years have passed since the awful tragedy at Oktyabrskaya metro station, when 11 people died at the scene and four later in hospital. In total, over 300 passengers were injured and are still living with the pain of that day.

We remember and mourn. It's difficult to pass the memorial plaque, which commemorates the names of those who perished, without feeling moved. On the tragedy's anniversary, lamps were again lit nearby and flowers lain down. People didn't hold back their tears and everyone slowed, to pay their respects.

Mikhail Baiduk leaves flowers to commemorate his friend, Andrey Ilyin. "We became friends, being neighbours; our flats were situated nearby. Later, when I moved, we kept in touch. I'm ashamed to say that I hardly dared to call his wife; it was so hard. Their family has a seven year old son and a small daughter; Andrey was anticipating her birth and they had many plans. He was a wonderful doctor, like his wife. Not long before the tragedy, they acquired their first car and Andrey gained his driving license. However, he didn't feel very comfortable at the wheel, so took the metro from habit," Mikhail notes.

On April 11th, Andrey Ilyin managed to crawl from the metro independently, although with great difficulty, being injured. He categorically refused aid from doctors, urging them to run to save those still underground, in the very hell. His terrible burns led to his death later in hospital, despite all doctors' efforts.

Candles were lit not only near the site of the tragedy. At first, the All Saints' Memorial Church hosted a requiem service and flowers were placed in the church's crypt, at the Plaque of Memory, which opened a year ago; they are found there always — day and night.

Then the Archcathedral Catholic in Minsk hosted a liturgy for those died and suffered as a result of the terrorist act conducted by the Metropolitan of Minsk and Mogilev, Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz.