

Pragmatic approach to science

At the session dedicated to the development of Belarus' scientific sphere, Alexander Lukashenko gave three months to elaborate a reform programme for Belarusian science, urging a compact and efficiently manageable structure without reform completely overthrowing the existing system

Alexander Lukashenko reminded those present at the recent meeting that, in December 2011, he ordered a set of measures to be developed to improve the scientific sphere. He now notes that, over the past two years, various options for change have been offered, including proposals to reform the Academy of Sciences. It could become a public organisation, transferring basic scientific research to universities, while encouraging all applied research to be conducted at enterprises.

Others have suggested that re-

search be concentrated within the academic sector, allowing the Academy of Sciences to become a huge research and production corporation, with the creation of holdings at its institutions, and at industrial and other enterprises. Some see the Academy of Sciences becoming a new body of national administration of scientific, technical and innovative activities.

Before making a decision on these proposals, Mr. Lukashenko has determined the direction and strategic challenges that lie ahead for Belarusian science. He believes that it should orient towards domestic economic needs, becoming an effective instrument of economic modernisation, with emphasis on applied developments.

The President is convinced that scientific research in the natural and human sciences should find practical application, via specific targeted programmes.

Speaking of funding, the Presi-

dent explains, "The scientific community, together with government officials, constantly complains about lack of financing in the scientific sphere. The knowledge content of our GDP is many times lower than in technologically advanced countries but it doesn't follow that the state should fit the bill for scientific development. What about industrial and commercial enterprises?"

The President believes that strategically important spheres should receive most attention, with extra-budgetary sources attracted.

Mr. Lukashenko believes it necessary to finally decide the fate of fundamental science. "Our country is not huge, and lacks wealth to develop a wide range of research but this is beside the point. In truth, what is the purpose of theoretical research? I look at the situation with pragmatism. I won't waste money and would prefer to see it spent in cutting-edge spheres: for

example, the 6th technological wave. We'll continue to develop areas in which Belarus has established leading global research: optics, laser physics, thermal physics, bio-organic chemistry and new materials. These should form the foundation for developing applied research and higher education," the President emphasises.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that a pragmatic approach should be used regarding our participation in major international projects — such as those relating to space and the Large Hadron Collider — since they not only meet scientific interests but help stimulate high-tech development at enterprises in Belarus. "We need to be pragmatic about our involvement," he asserts.

The Head of State has demanded that all organisations involved in science revise their orientation, especially the National Academy of Sciences. The President believes that, in order to avoid further waste



of human and financial resources, we need to ensure efficient organisation and co-ordination of research in academic, industrial and university sectors of science at national level. He is keen to eliminate departmental fragmentation and duplication of efforts, noting, "If we want to enjoy heavy payoff from research in manufacturing, we need to restore industrial science, allowing it to guide advanced technologies at particular enterprises, harking back to how things were organised in the Soviet period."

Mr. Lukashenko believes that all issues will be resolved following careful, comprehensive and open discussion between the scientific community and governmental agencies, and has set a deadline of three months for the development of a programme of reform for Belarusian science.

Making every little count

Museum of Belarusians of the World soon to open in Minsk



Museum of Belarusians of the World of interest to Belarusian citizens globally

By Lyudmila Minakova

The Belarusians of the World exhibition, hosted at Belarus' Culture Institute, brings together artefacts from the National History Museum and works created by the With Honour Association of Belarusian Artists, in Latvia.

Among the unique exhibits is a 30 year old photo of a Belarusian wedding in Australia and a 1977 poster of the Belarusian festival in New Jersey. Caps worn by Belarusians students at Belgium's oldest university (in Leuven) are also on show.

Around a decade ago, the Republican Scientific-Educational Centre closed (named after Frantsisk Skorina and headed by Doctor of Philology, Prof. Adam Maldis).

Its valuable exhibits — books, paintings and personal belongings from the Belarusian diaspora — were distributed across several agencies but Mr. Maldis has been working with the Culture Institute, where he is currently employed, to reunite the rich collection.

Alexander Khromoy, the Deputy Director of the National History Museum, comments, "Our museum has preserved around 60 percent of the materials. Sadly, although the remaining artefacts are not completely lost, they are scattered in small numbers across numerous institutions. We are doing everything possible to make this exhibition part of our museum or, at least, a branch of our museum."

The project would hardly have been realised without the enterpris-

ing employees of the Culture Institute — such as Prof. Maldis and the Head of the Historical-Cultural Heritage Protection Department, Alla Stashkevich. Moreover, the Belarusian diaspora — who should primarily benefit from the project — have donated many items and continue sending books, films and personal belongings connected to their life abroad, including paintings and other artefacts created during their life beyond the Republic.

Among the first exhibits donated were works by artists living in Latvia: members of the Association of Belarusian Artists of the Baltic States. The paintings depict Old Vilnius, Jerusalem, the Himalayas and other natural wonders seen by our countrymen. "We need shows

in Belarus," explains the Association's Head, Vyachka Telesh. "We're exhibiting in Latvia and other states but feel more 'at home' here."

The Belarusians of the World Museum is sure to also prove popular with residents of the Republic. "Belarusians know little of their countrymen abroad, of whom they could feel proud," notes the Head of the Belarus-Belgium Society, Tamara Antonovich. "Among such people is Laurent Klybik, who is unique. At the age of 16, he moved to Belgium to study pharmacy at Leuven University. After graduating, he bought a pharmacy and was among the first to produce homeopathic medicines (much in demand in neighbouring states). Laurent can speak Belarusian, Russian, German, English, Polish and Hebrew. To learn Chinese, he has set up a restaurant, inviting a Chinese cook. Interestingly, a map of Belarus, marking his home village, welcomes all guests at reception. He is proud of Belarus and of his Belarusian nationality."

Pride in your native land, and its people, is an obvious theme of the exhibition and will be encapsulated perfectly at the planned Belarusians of the World Museum. "I'm delighted to see you, my dear countrymen, gathered round me. I feel that we cannot be indifferent to each other," smiles jeweller Piotr Yakubuk — a member of Ukraine's Union of Artists and a master of decorative-applied art. "We never forget our homeland while living abroad. We speak Belarusian and arrange Belarusian parties and holidays. We're also involved in diverse artistic activities; I make precious Crimean themed decorations for women and dream of organising a personal show in Belarus. I'd love to come to Minsk and know where my works could be housed: at the Belarusians of the World Museum."



Belavia's regular flight

Clear sky between Minsk and Geneva

By Anton Ivanov

Belavia planes to fly to Switzerland

A new Minsk-Geneva-Minsk flight is to join Belavia's schedule from 17th December. Flights to the International Airport of Geneva will be carried out using Embraer 175, CRJ-100/200 and Boeing 737-500 aircraft three times a week: on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. An economy class return ticket will cost 275 Euros, while a one-way ticket will be priced from 248 Euros. A business class return will cost upwards of 975 Euros, while a one-way ticket will be priced from 579 Euros.

Air carriers expect the route to prove popular with businessmen and tourists. Anatoly Gusarov, Director General of Belavia, the national airline, notes, "In winter, flights to Geneva should be especially attractive to those wishing to go skiing or snowboarding. Transfer from the airport to the main ski resorts should only take 1-2 hours, as Geneva's airport is almost on the border with France, making it attractive to those wishing to see a great deal in a single trip."