

Government to take additional measures

Production modernisation should raise revenue per capita employed

By Vasily Kharitonov

Modernisation of Belarusian economy high on agenda as Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Prokopovich delivers report to President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko.

Modernisation is vital to the well-being of the nation, helping raise labour efficiency and, ultimately, salaries, bringing better living standards, a stable foreign trade surplus and competitiveness for Belarusian products. The Head of State constantly

monitors modernisation and holds the Government answerable for progress in this area.

The Deputy PM's report informed the President that the first six months of 2013 have seen modernisation at 3,680 state owned enterprises and about 1,000 private companies, including small and medium-sized. Major ventures are being launched using foreign and Belarusian capital.

However, Mr. Prokopovich admitted that annual targets are not being met, with the first half of this year

seeing individual earnings rise by 11.5 percent (against 2012), against a target of at least 25 percent.

From January-July 2013, fixed capital investments stood at 108.8 percent (against 2012): slightly above the target of 106 percent. However, modernisation goals are yet to be met, with fewer than half of enterprises on schedule. Mr. Prokopovich believes that additional incentives are needed to accomplish our goals, and sees management as the sphere most in need of reform. He explains, "No

cutting-edge equipment and technologies will be effective if an efficient management system is lacking, alongside a system to motivate workers, enforcing strict discipline and technologies. If we fail, we won't be able to use our technical modernisation resources effectively."

He underlined to the President that it's necessary to create an economic management system to ensure competitiveness for Belarusian goods and their conformance with top world standards. "Unfortunately,

we currently lag behind, which leads to being uncompetitive in many areas," said the Deputy PM.

The Head of State has requested that all necessary measures be taken to ensure that goals are met fully by the modernisation programme for 2013, including making headway in modernising the entire economy by 2014-2015. Mr. Prokopovich assured Mr. Lukashenko that the Government will be doing its best to fulfil the instructions of the Belarusian President.

Preparing tomorrow's workforce

State ready to assist families in preparing children for school, tackling problems thoroughly

By Vladimir Khromov

New school year preparations discussed during meeting between President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko and Education Minister Sergey Maskevich.

The meeting was also attended by the First Deputy Head of the President's Administration, Alexander Radkov, discussing preparations for the new school year and enrolment into Belarusian educational establishments, as well as training of specialists in universities and vocational schools in accordance with the needs of the national economy, and the development of the education system over all.

The President stressed that the state is ready to provide funding to help cover the costs of schooling, if needed. However, he emphasised that funds must be targeted carefully and allocated directly for children, making note that parents unable to clothe their children properly may not be best placed to administer funds themselves. He explained, "You are

aware of who such parents are in most cases."

Moreover, the President drew attention to security issues, saying that everything must be done properly in schools and rules implemented without exception, to improve the level of discipline and organisation of work.

The meeting also tackled the implementation of the President's instructions regarding the further development of the education system. The Minister reported on progress at secondary schools, alongside the development of professional education. Vocational education via regional colleges also came under scrutiny, with the emphasis on colleges offering training feeding directly into regional industry. The President is keen to address the needs of the country's regions regard-



Going to school — armed at all points

ing personnel with vocational training, believing that modern colleges should offer appropriate educational programmes at a high professional level.

In addition, Mr. Lukashenko believes that training must include a practical element, with

professional industrial experience, to best prepare tomorrow's workforce. The Education Ministry has also been asked to look at contract-based training, with a view to improving admission rules into educational establishments.

Land — for efficient manufacturing

By Veniamin Svetlovsky

Alexander Lukashenko supports the concept of developing investment activity in the Minsk Region

During a working meeting with the Chairman of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Boris Batura, the President heard a report on the development of investment activity across the Minsk Region, alongside a range of proposals regarding the implementation of separate investment projects.

Mr. Lukashenko believes land lots should only be allocated to highly-efficient manufacturing facilities. In total, around 350 investment projects are currently being realised in the Minsk Region.

Projects useful for studies

Belarusian State University taking part in two new international projects, as part of EU's Erasmus Mundus education programme

The *Erasmus Mundus* programme finances the academic exchange of students, teachers and scientists between universities across the CIS and EU. One such is the *Hermes* project, developing humanitarian education, based on world experience. This will allow BSU representatives to undergo education and internships abroad, at seven EU universities. Meanwhile, the *Humeria* project includes a contest inviting applications for scholarships and internships at several more European universities. The two projects will provide BSU undergraduates, post-graduate students and master's students, as well as teachers and young scientists, with education and internships at another university, for periods of 1-3 months. Grants cover fees and travel, allowing study of specific subject areas at more than one university.

The BSU is taking part in four similar international projects within *Erasmus Mundus*. This autumn, traditional competitions will be announced, alongside two new projects.

A good degree of protection

By Tatiana Smirnova

Belarus leads among CIS countries for most favourable conditions of maternity and childbirth

According to *Save the Children* international annual ranking, our country is in 26th place among 160 countries worldwide. Ms. Svetlana Soroka, the chief obstetrician-gynaecologist at the Department Rendering Medical Care to Mothers and Children, within the Ministry of Health, tells us, "Belarus has one

of the most advanced obstetric-gynaecological and paediatric services, preserving the Soviet model of health care, which is recognised by experts as the best in the world for affordable health care." She adds that the level of infant, child and maternal mortality in Belarus is third best among developed countries worldwide. "Last year, the infant mortality rate reached 3.4 per thousand newborns: one of the best in the CIS and close to the death rate for under fives (4.4 per thousand last year)."

In recent years, the country

has greatly improved social and health protection for mothers and children, giving social support to families from birth onwards. Major state programmes provide financial assistance to families of all sizes in acquiring housing — including purchase and renovation — and in free provision of food to children up to the age of 2 years, via targeted social assistance. Today's system of state benefits covers 25 percent of children, with 99 percent under the age of 3 years.

"These measures, alongside the

favourable age structure of the female population, undoubtedly, are contributing to the stabilisation of fertility," notes Ms. Soroka. "Since 2004, all regions have seen an increase in the birth rate. In 2010, there were 107,279 births, including 1,027 cases of twins, 18 triplets and one set of quadruplets. In 2011, there were 108,356 births, with 1007 cases of twins and 29 sets of triplets. Last year, the number of births stood at 114,897, with twins born in 1178 cases, triplets in 45 cases and one set of quadruplets."