

Holiday of kindness

Visiting Praleska Children's Medical Rehabilitation Centre in the Volozhin District's Rakov, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko notes that children remain priority in state social policy

By Veniamin Mikheev

The Head of State toured accommodation and medical facilities at the centre, chatting easily with children and wishing them a 'Happy New Year', as well as presenting table games, decorations and sweets. The children will now be able to watch their favourite cartoons and fairy-tales on a new home theatre system.

Mr. Lukashenko and his younger son Nikolai took part in a children's New Year party and danced with the little patients at the centre. Artistes

from the Belarusian State Circus presented a show, and the children were delighted by a large festive cake from the President, cut to accompany tea.

The children also wished the President a 'Happy New Year' and handed over a gift on behalf of Minsk children, while a girl presented Mr. Lukashenko with her picture of a magical bird of happiness. Praleska Children's Spa opened in 1987, for children with digestive and respiratory problems. In April 2005, it was renamed as the Praleska Municipal Children's Centre of Medical Rehabilitation. Renova-

tions were recently completed, giving the centre three new departments: for children suffering from gastrointestinal tract problems, diseases of the respiratory system, and impairments to vision. The centre's medical base has been expanded and it now boasts playgrounds where children can play tennis and other sports, and take exercise therapy. Entertainments are also available for younger children.

The Head of State is keen to see this and other similar institutions used fully. Belarus' Health Minister, Vasily Zharko, reported that this cen-



Holiday has come to children from Praleska

tre has everything it needs to treat and rehabilitate children, and is being used to the full.

Mr. Lukashenko pointed out the need to optimise staff at medical institutions, since the ratio of staff to patients is rather high at present. He believes that heads of healthcare institutions should operate with as many employees as needed, without raising the payroll. "You can work independently if you want to but the results must be efficient. Decide how to spend your funding but don't take

this money for granted and lay claims on us," noted the President.

Addressing officials, Mr. Lukashenko demanded that they act now rather than waiting for additional regulatory acts. He said, "We'll see what happens after the first three months."

Mr. Zharko noted that, over the past year, the number of those employed in the healthcare sphere has been reduced by almost 1,500 people: most cuts have been made in engineering and staff services, as well as among accountants and economists.

Optimism inspires confidence

By Vladimir Khromov

Government convinced that Belarus able to maintain currency stability in 2014

During a solemn ceremony awarding the winners and laureates of the *Best Entrepreneur 2012* nationwide competition, hosted by the National Library of Belarus, Belarusian Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov underlined that the Government is convinced that the country can maintain currency stability in 2014.

"We've absolutely no doubts that the country's currency market will remain stable, and that gold-and-currency reserves will increase," noted the Head of Government. He admitted that entrepreneurs are yet to gain access to affordable loans to expand their businesses but that this situation should improve with time, helping small and medium-sized businesses thrive.

The PM noted that external borrowing is vital to Belarus, emphasising that loans provided to Belarus by other countries, primarily by the Russian Federation, are not intended to resolve current economic problems. Mr. Myasnikov reminded that 2014 will be a year in which major payments will be made on old external debts, estimated at \$3.6bn. He believes 2015 will be rather easier.

Mr. Myasnikov stressed that the Government has been trying to minimise external borrowing, using it only to repay and service old debts. "Of course, the rest should be earned by the economy," he noted. "These loans are not very expensive, but this money should be paid off. Accordingly, we need to optimise spending, so that we spend only what we've earned."

He deems it necessary to toughen Belarus' currency laws, particularly ensuring fair business practices on the currency market. "Today's domestic currency market is extremely liberal, as is the norm worldwide. However, a liberal currency market works well when the national currency is freely convertible," explained the Prime Minister.

On close terms with computer science

Web Surrenders to All Ages Belarusian project wins gold at prestigious Ukrainian PR competition



All ages surrender to computer era

By Andrey Fiodorov

The *Web Surrenders to All Ages* social and educational project from Belarus, which teaches elderly people Internet skills, has received gold at the prestigious Ukrainian *Pravda Awards*. Implemented by a Belarusian mobile operator and the Belarusian Association of Social Workers, it has won the 'Efficiency' nomination

and has been awarded a special prize from the *Marketing Media Review* magazine.

The professional contest in Kiev brought together 45 projects from across Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

The computer classes are run by volunteers, including students of Belarusian universities. In addition, lessons are supported by pension-

ers who have already mastered the necessary computer and Internet skills. The project began in Minsk in October, and over 350 pensioners are currently being taught within the programme. The first 'graduates' will appear in January and new 'students' will be enrolled. The idea is so successful that the organisers plan to launch the project in other Belarusian cities.

Deservedly high assessments

By Andrey Fiodorov

Belarusian State University ranked second among those in CIS, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia

A total of 405 universities from 15 countries have been analysed, with Moscow Lomonosov State University topping the list and St.

Petersburg State University coming third. The top five also includes Taras Shevchenko National University in Kiev and Vilnius University.

In all, 21 universities in Belarus have been rated, with the Belarusian State Technological University ranked 24th, and the Belarusian National Technical University 32nd. Belarus is ranked third behind Rus-

sia and Ukraine.

The university rating of the CIS, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia took into account three spheres of university activity: educational, scientific-research and international. The list was compiled with the help of the British QS Agency, which has published annual QS World University Rankings over the last decade.

Positions proven by investigation

By Andrey Sokolov

Russians view Belarus as most successful CIS state

The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VTsIOM) has found that half of the Russians polled view Belarus as the most successful country in the Commonwealth, while 35 percent name Kazakhstan and 21 percent Ukraine. Belarus led in other answers, being named as Russia's most reliable partner by 51 percent of respondents; 37 percent name Kazakhstan while Ukraine receives 18 percent of votes and 5 percent of respondents are in favour of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Just 2 percent name Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Georgia.

Alexander Lukashenko leads confidence ratings for political leaders, with 41 percent of the vote, while the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, scores 33 percent. Ukrainian leader Viktor Yanukovich closes the top three, with 10 percent of the vote. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev receives 5 percent while the heads of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Georgia and Moldova enjoy the confidence of only a small section of Russians (1 to 3 percent). The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre held the poll in mid-November, interviewing 1,600 people.

Speaking Belarusian in orbit

By Sergey Ivanov

Russia ready to assist Belarus in training cosmonauts

Minsk has hosted a meeting between the Head of the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos), Oleg Ostapenko, and the Head of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. "We intend to develop major co-operation with Belarus in space exploration," noted Mr. Ostapenko. In his words, if relevant decisions are made regarding the training of cosmonauts from Belarus, Roscosmos is ready to provide the necessary help.