



Teacher — Inessa Zubrilina

Ms. Zubrilina has won the 'Crystal Crane' prize and a 'Lada' car, presented by the President of Belarus. After the official award

Open lesson from best teachers

Inessa Zubrilina, an English language teacher from gymnasium #1 in the Mogilev Region's Dyatlovo, wins *Teacher of the Year of the Republic of Belarus — 2011* contest

ceremony, Alexander Lukashenko chatted with the contest's finalists.

Ms. Zubrilina's family has 14 teachers. Talking to journalists, she admits, "I grew up at the school desk. From childhood, I imagined myself only as a teacher." She believes that today's schoolchildren differ drastically from her own generation, being more mobile, advanced and able to quickly master modern technology. Teaching at higher levels is a real challenge, since the volume of information doubles every 18 months and old knowledge quickly becomes obsolete. Teachers must keep up with the times and Ms. Zubrilina's knowledge of foreign languages and the Internet helps her greatly. The teacher admits that she finds foreign sources useful in preparing her lessons.

As ever, a love of children is essential in the teaching profession, as Ms. Zubrilina and her

colleagues note. Dmitry Shits, the Director of Polotsk secondary school #18 (named after Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya) tells us that he missed work and chatting with children after spending two weeks away, attending the final round of the contest, held in Minsk.

Mr. Lukashenko recognises teachers' passionate devotion and the value of an artistic approach, being a graduate of the Pedagogical University himself. Addressing the contest's finalists, he recalled the words of academician Likhachev: 'Teaching is art. A teacher addresses the human soul not via music, as a composer, and not via paint, as an artist, but directly, educating through their own knowledge and love and their attitude to the world'.

Like all professionals, teachers are concerned not only by lofty ideas but by daily routine. Speaking about salaries, the President

noted that, like doctors, the best teachers should earn much more than the average. "I support the idea that the best should be encouraged," stressed Mr. Lukashenko.

Other topical issues were tackled during informal talks, such as teachers' prestige and the burden placed on school staff. The President considers that experienced teachers should not be forced to retire on achieving pensionable age, being allowed to continue if they wish.

Teachers also shared their private hobbies and interests with the President, reading poems, and talking of their passion for fishing, diving and 'Formula One' racing. Mr. Lukashenko announced that it had been a true pleasure for him to chat and that he felt inspired. As he admitted, our country must have a bright future at the hands of such teachers.

Experts to help businessmen

Innovative Centre for Belarus-China Co-operation to be launched at Belarusian State University's Republican Institute of Sinology, named after Confucius

The Centre is to collect and analyse information on the Chinese economy and market situation, while supervising agreements between Belarusian and Chinese companies. The Institute's Director, Alexander Gordei, believes this will promote business relations between our two countries. He notes that Belarusian companies often lack understanding of how their work with Chinese partners should be organised. On delivering Belarus-made goods to China, our manufacturers may not realise that conditions in China differ from those in Belarus. The Belarus-China Innovative Centre is to open in late 2011-early 2012 while the Republican Institute of Sinology will offer training for top and middle-level managers from leading Belarusian companies in 2011-2012. The largest firms will then be selected to attend Institute lectures and seminars on trade with China. A specialised library is to be set up at the Institute, while training materials on the economic and social development of modern China are to be published. These will cover the expansion of partner relations between our two states in the fields of foreign policy and investments.

Time to expand private sector to encourage future economic growth

Government holds extensive talks with business representatives — using Council of Ministers' Presidium format for the first time

By Inna Yerenko

According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the private sector accounts for no more than 25 percent of the country's GDP. In neighbouring Russia, this figure stands at 65 percent, in Ukraine and Kazakhstan — 60 percent, and in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan — 75 percent. "We are lagging behind," notes Economy Minister Nikolai Snopkov, asserting that we must adjust the infrastructure of the economy to encourage the private sector. This could be the foundation for future economic growth, as businesses agree.

Vladimir Karyagin, the Chairman of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, stresses that production entrepreneurship is vital, with businessmen being allowed to buy their premises. Most currently rent, which hampers them from taking loans (having nothing to pledge). Moreover, they cannot attract investments, as few are interested in injecting money into businesses which lack ownership of property. In addition, taxation needs to be simplified, with businessmen noting that Belarus' taxes are higher than those of Russia or Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, individual entrepreneurs are eager to be allowed to hire workers outside of their close relatives.

The Government shares the worries of businesses. Mr. Snopkov



Government ready to focus on businesses as basis of economic growth

is convinced that small privatisation mechanisms should be launched anew, with de-bureaucratisation continuing. Ideally, businesses should spend no more than 10 percent of their time on administration issues. The Economy Minister is also convinced that equal access to raw materials is essential. Moreover, division into such notions as 'state' and 'private' should be eliminated.

Mr. Karyagin tells us that the meeting involved serious discussion. Business initiatives were heard and approved, although no concrete decisions have been taken yet. Prob-

ably, these should not have been expected after a first meeting. Nevertheless, points of agreement and disagreement were to the fore. As regards taxation simplification, advancement looks possible only regarding profit tax. As for other taxes, the Finance Minister has promised to study the situation and analyse the taxation system of neighbouring states. Employment of workers by individual entrepreneurs is also still being studied, with no definite plan of action as yet. As Mr. Karyagin notes, businessmen and the Government differ in their views of what

constitutes a 'result'. "Officials consider that a result has been achieved if discussions are underway while businesses only view a goal as met once a decision has been made and they are working under new conditions," he added.

Naturally, dialogue is to continue. The business unions' proposal to set up public-consultative councils at executive committees and ministries has been approved. Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich is hopeful that, by early 2012, a package of documents on direct action will be ready.

Matter of sharp minds

Would a Belarusian State University student of applied mathematics ever imagine that he'd take a job with famous Facebook?

The young man hoped to lecture after receiving his Master's Degree but unexpectedly came across an Internet advert placed by the popular social network site and, pleasingly, passed the interview. In fact, Vladimir Kotov, who heads the Chair for Discrete Mathematics and Algorithms at the Belarusian State University's Department of Applied Mathematics and Informatics, asserts, "It's no problem for talented IT students to find highly-paid jobs. Such specialists are in demand both in Belarus and abroad."

Valery Prytkov, the Dean of the Computer Systems and Networks Department at the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, also believes it to be possible to find a job with a globally known company — if a graduate's desire is strong enough. At present, former alumni of the Belarusian State University and the State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics work for such companies as Microsoft, Google and Yandex.

Naturally, not only globally acknowledged companies need professionals. Those employed by a Belarusian IT company generally receive a generous local salary of \$1,200 per month but the number of those studying IT is dropping, creating a shortfall. The distribution system partially solves the problem (when a university sends state-funded alumni to a specific workplace). Of course, it's no easy task to become an IT professional but our domestic companies are crying out for more such graduates.