

Legal assessment inspires dialogue

Parliamentarians expect new Government to promptly solve many problems

By Yevgeny Nikonov

Deputies have adopted the final plan for the Government's work for the next five years, at the last sitting of the House of Representatives' special seventh session. Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov noted that all the proposals by the deputies — 60 in total — have been taken into account. "We plan to seriously change our methods of work to achieve our targets, inspiring initiatives and entrepreneurial spirit. We need decisive structural reform. Of course, excessive centralisation is a blessing for many, since it takes away the need to think and co-ordinate the work of related bodies. They've got used to fulfilling the orders of others; this results in a lot of paperwork and the need to meet by-laws; we should move away from the latter," he said.

Mr. Myasnikov is giving special attention to privatisation. Speaking to his opponents, he noted, "An efficient owner is vital; no other approach will be applied." The Prime Minister assured those present that the decision on which strategic companies to privatise is in the hands of the President alone. As regards other facilities, Mr. Myasnikov believes there are no grounds for fear. After privatisation, companies don't disappear; they continue employing citizens, while taxes are paid to the Belarusian budget. "Money generated from privatisation should not be spent on current expenses but will go towards modernisation of old facilities and construction of new plants," he explained, adding, "We need to understand that, without economic restructuring, our negative balance will reach at least \$4.5bn by 2015 — under favourable



All deputies' proposals taken into account by Government

conditions."

Parliamentarians have asked the Constitutional Court to decide how the Polish law 'On Pole's Card' meets 'generally acknowledged principles and norms of international law'. The document came into force in March 2008, covering all post-Soviet states but is primarily aimed at citizens of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Igor Karpenko, the Chairman of the House of Representatives' Standing Committee for International Affairs and Links with the CIS, says that, in the two years' time, the 'Pole's Card' has been issued to 14,509 Belarusians. He believes that 'this docu-

ment is of a discriminatory character, dividing ethnic Poles in our country between those eligible for a 'Pole's Card' and those who are not'. It is issued by consular establishments, although he asserts that they have no right to issue any documents to local citizens except visas. Moreover, lists of Belarusians with such cards are sent to Poland's Department of Home Affairs, as well as to security and border agencies. The deputies hope that the Constitutional Court's legal assessment will provide a good argument for further dialogue with Polish authorities regarding the document's issuing.

First-hand news becoming more available

World TV companies to gain information about Belarus via European Broadcasting Union's satellite network of news exchange

The Belarusian TV and Radio Company and European Broadcasting Union have expanded their co-operation. From now on, the world's largest TV companies will be able to receive news and video materials on events taking place in Belarus. Especially for its foreign colleagues, the Belarusian TV and Radio Company's Agency of TV News has begun producing video blogs, accompanied by English language annotations. These cover various topics of interest to both Belarusians and foreigners, including economy, politics, weather forecasts and animal programmes.

Depending on the significance of an event, information is to be placed on the European Broadcasting Union's regional, European or global news exchange channels, allowing those living great distances from Belarus to learn about the country.

Travellers to learn more

Tourist-information centre of Belarus to open in Berlin

Similar centres already operate in Warsaw, Rome and Russian Kaliningrad and, in coming years, are to appear in other major European cities. The Tourism and Sports Ministry has plans to set up information centres in most domestic cities, to help travellers from Belarus and abroad locate information on hotels, leisure sites, rural farmsteads and historical sights.

The Republican budget has been allocating funds to promote Belarus as a tourist destination for several years, with the national tourist industry annually participating in 14 specialised fairs globally.

Thoughts concentrated in modestly sized space

High-Tech Park becomes major software exporter



High-Tech Park especially focuses on training qualified specialists

By Vladimir Yakovlev

In Soviet times, the Akademgorodok (town for academicians) was established close to Minsk's ring road. One after another, new buildings were erected to house the most promising research institutions, with their own design bureaus and experienced production. The High-Tech Park has been operating on the site for five years now, being the first of its kind in Belarus and in all of Eastern and Central Europe specialising in software development.

"For Belarus, this is quite a promising avenue, since it requires no metal, oil or other raw materials — whose deposits we lack or which exist only in small volumes," explains Valery Tsepka, who initiated the HTP project and now heads its administration. "Intellect is the major driving force here. At present, over 90 companies work at the Park, employing around 9,500 programmers — a figure comparable to the staff of a large factory, like the Belarusian Automobile Works. Every year, our

economic activity grows 1.5-2-fold and, in 2010, it reached \$200m. Five years ago, Belarus exported 4 times less software. American and Canadian firms are buying about 40 percent of our produce, followed by companies from the European Union. Our partners include the largest corporations and banks from all over the world."

The state has given its support, with most money spent on infrastructure and focus given to attracting foreign investors. To create a favourable micro-climate for them, the HTP has drawn on similar experience from Ireland, Singapore, India, China and elsewhere, with tax preferences for firms operating within the HTP. Each pays reduced VAT and income tax (especially important for the IT sphere). Moreover, the Park offers a range of services for start-up companies, helping with construction of new buildings and giving financial and accounting consultations.

The major advantage of the HTP is its ability to offer privileges to its companies regardless of their

'nationality'. They can adapt to new economic conditions, allowing them to find clients and specialists. The Park also offers beneficial guardianship to young companies, with privileged rental rates for start-ups. Moreover, trips abroad are organised to help firms meet potential customers; Belarusian embassies help the HTP greatly in this respect.

"We focus on finding and training specialists," continues Mr. Tsepka. "About 30 laboratories operate at Belarus' leading universities, with students working on applied tasks to give them valuable experience. By the time they graduate, most of these talented young people have several options for employment. There was a time when our IT graduates felt obliged to seek work abroad but that's not the case now. The HTP offers interesting and well paid jobs, in addition to the opportunity to perfect foreign languages. About ten percent of working hours are spent on foreign trips. Meanwhile, foreign firms make fewer overtures to poach our specialists."

Exhibitions drive forward collaboration

Eleven national exhibitions to promote domestic technologies, scientific developments, goods and services to foreign markets

Calendar of Belarusian exhibitions was launched in January, with participation in International Green Week Berlin. In March, Belarus' national exhibitions will be held in Ukraine (Lvov), gathering representatives of many industrial companies. In April, Belarus will join the German Hannover Fair and, in May, it will take part in the *Sima Industrial Expo* (Damascus, Syria). From June to July, Belarus will be represented at an international exhibition in Moscow: *CIS' 20th Anniversary*. It is also due to take part in the *Saitex* South African International Trade Exhibition (Johannesburg, SAR) in July and in the Vietnam International Trade Fair (Ho Chi Minh) from November to December.

Additionally, Belarus will be joining the international *Transport of Russia* exhibition (held in Moscow in April) and *Transport Logistic-2011* (held in German Munich in May).

Great money for the capital

Last year, foreign investors injected over \$2bn into Minsk's economy

A third of this sum has been spent on trade and public catering. The location of Minsk in the country's centre promoted the development of such spheres as transport and transport services. Almost \$600m has been spent on these purposes. Most of foreign injections came from Russia, Austria, Cyprus and the UK.

This year, Minsk's City Executive Committee will be focusing on attracting foreign capital into industry, especially into manufactures, which produce export-oriented and science-intensive goods.

Isle of native culture set up in Moldova

By Andrey Gusin

Belarus' weekend school opens in Chisinau

The school is to be attended by Belarusian children living in Moldova, including children of Belarusian Embassy staff from the mission in Chisinau. It will focus on training senior pupils for entrance examinations for Belarusian universities, with lessons offering a comprehensive grounding in Belarusian studies. Children will follow the educational curriculum from Minsk, with a thorough study of Belarusian language, literature and history. Representatives of the Belarusian community in Moldova are also expected to attend lessons.

A museum is to open at the site, housing national costumes and other exhibits detailing Belarusian traditions and customs.