

# distance between two states

day in Qatar was devoted to informal talks. Mr. Lukashenko again met Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, at the invitation of the Qatari ruler, meeting not in the business-like atmosphere of the Emir's residence but at the fashionable Four Seasons Hotel, where the Belarusian delegation stayed. According to the President, our two countries can efficiently interact in the fields of energy, petro-chemistry, transport, communications, construction, food production and manufacturing of construction materials and industrial products. Belarus believes that attraction of Qatari investments into these branches would generate the greatest profit. In turn, Minsk guarantees to promptly settle all issues. This was well demonstrated when a land lot was allocated in Minsk for the construction of a hotel-sports complex for the 2014 IIHF World Championship.

Summing up the results of his visit, Mr. Lukashenko noted that the sphere of our two states' collaboration has been extended. "Belarus boasts unique opportunities while Qatar possesses huge financial resources. Their lack of possibilities and our lack of finances form the foundation of our mutual relations. The Emir wants to inject money into profitable projects, to enhance the welfare of his people, so we've proposed various ventures," he said, speaking in detail about these projects.

At the Emir's request, the setting up of a powerful financial centre in Belarus is being studied. Qatar has extensive, successful experience of accomplishing such projects, and is also interested in logistics. Belarus has proposed establishing two centres: near Orsha and



Alexander Lukashenko and Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani conduct substantial bilateral talks

Brest. Additionally, Doha is interested in the creation of a powerful industrial zone in the Republic: Qatari Island in Europe. Qatar has asked Belarus to allocate land for this and some other construction sites, since a range of projects are being discussed, including the building of a Belarusian residence for the Emir.

Qatar is showing interest in raising its presence in Belarus. Mr. Lukashenko's visit was much covered by the local printed media, while a local TV channel endlessly broadcast the visit. Two English language newspapers — *The Gulf Times* and *Peninsula* — printed photos of the Doha Belarusian-Qatari talks for several days in a row.

Members of the Belarusian state delegation well represented the range of in-

terests in this small Persian Gulf state. The President was accompanied by the First Deputy Prime Minister — Vladimir Semashko, the Foreign Minister — Sergei Martynov, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister — Vladimir Tsalko, the Aid to the President for National Security Affairs — Viktor Lukashenko, Belneftkhim Chairman — Igor Zhilin, and others. Talks were held with Qatari partners, discussing the mining of fertilisers, potassium and other mineral deposits.

It's amazing how Qatar has managed to create a dynamically developing economy under such tough climatic conditions (the temperature of the Persian Gulf's waters is the same as the temperature of the human body while the air is

much hotter). Its GDP demonstrates 20 percent growth annually, but oil generated Dollars must be used wisely, which Qatar is succeeding in doing. The monarchy is not an isolated regime; it's open to the world — attracting the best workers and guarding its image carefully. One of the best airlines in the world is Qatari, while Doha hosts the famous tennis tournament for women. The largest American and European universities have opened branches in the local educational town.

Meanwhile, the Qatari capital is seeking interesting projects in other countries; its attention to Belarus indicates the attractiveness of our economy. The President has many times said that no closed topics exist with Qatar. To learn more about one another, Minsk and Doha

have agreed to exchange Days of Culture.

Military co-operation — which is not our major priority at present — is also worth mentioning. It's known that the Qatari army is focused on liaising with Western states; the Emir even studied at the British Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Moreover, Qatar participates in NATO operations in Libya. Nevertheless, Doha and Minsk have established closed contacts in the military sphere. In October 2008, a Belarusian delegation — headed by the Defence Minister — took part in 'Ferocious Falcon' international military exercises in Qatar. Later, in 2010, our observers went to the Persian Gulf region, where Arab, American and European military forces were polishing their mastery.

The Emir's nationals appreciate the professionalism of the Belarusian military and often come to Minsk to enhance their qualifications (overseen by the Interior Ministry, the President's Security Service and the Defence Ministry). A year ago, newspapers wrote about nine Qatari military men who completed a six month course at Kolodishchi Dog Breeding Centre. In turn, our servicemen have studied Arabic in Doha.

This is how reciprocity works, covering all spheres of our bilateral collaboration. To strengthen this co-operation and start realising projects, Minsk and Doha will exchange visits by business circles in the near future. Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has promised to come to Minsk this winter.

## Optimistic views on trade



Negotiations with Russian businessmen at Belarusian Government

**On meeting Belarus' Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikovich, at the Council of Ministers of the Union State session, Russia's Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, notes that Belarus and Russia boast significant potential to raise turnover this year, exceeding the 2008 pre-crisis level**

Analysing trends in bilateral trade, Mr. Putin positively assessed the situation. In 2010, our bilateral trade was on

the rise and, from January-June 2011, it reached \$17.6bn. According to the Chairman of the Russian Government, if this continues, the pre-crisis level of 2008 could be exceeded. Mr. Putin added that Belarus-Russia integration within the Union State is yielding fruit, although some issues require further attention.

Mr. Myasnikovich noted that our two states are planning various joint sci-tech programmes and innovative projects, showing a new level of bilat-

eral co-operation.

Russia is Belarus' major trading partner and, in 2010, accounted for almost half of the Republic's total foreign trade. Belarus is also among Russia's main partners, occupying sixth position in its foreign trade — behind China, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Ukraine.

Recently, export and import transactions between our two countries have undergone certain changes. Belarus exports primarily milk and dairy products, meat and meat products, trucks, tractors and tractive units, agricultural vehicles, tyres and furniture, while importing Russian oil, natural gas, oil products, rolled steel, fertilisers, internal combustion engines, electricity and ferrous scrap. In H1 2011, Belarus exported 1,048 products to Russia (against 909 in the same period of 2010).

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