

President's Address deferred to later date

The President's State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and National Assembly has been deferred from its scheduled date of April 19th. According to Pavel Legky, the Head of the Presidential Press Service, this is due to the President rejecting the draft Address prepared for him.

Mr. Lukashenko has asked for policies tackling privatisation and the country's foreign affairs to be revised. He particularly wishes to see the inadmissibility of too 'liberal' approach regarding the sale of state property. He is firmly against 'avalanching' privatisation, wishing to ensure that the interests of workers and citizens are protected during possible privatisation of enterprises. As far as foreign policy is concerned, the President is against severe reactions to the problems arising in relations of Belarus with its partners.

Recently, Mr. Lukashenko has given extra time to sessions tackling privatisation and foreign policy, making a range of key statements.

Problems to be solved

Belarus and Russia agree procedures to ensure equal rights for citizens regarding education, health care and registration of place of residence, explains State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota

The State Secretary notes that much has been achieved in the sphere of ensuring equal rights but that enforcement is still lacking. "Rules governing free medical assistance for citizens registered permanently in each other's territory are operational but legislation is needed for those staying temporarily," explains Mr. Rapota.

"Our citizens already boast unrestricted, equal access to higher educational establishments in either of our two states. Around 20,000 Belarusian residents study in Russia while about 2,000 Russians study in Belarus. However, the entrance rules are different, so we're working to harmonise this," continues the State Secretary. He believes several such problems still require solution — including in the sphere of pension provision.

At present, the term of stay without registration for Belarusian citizens in Russia is being extended from 30 to 90 days. "The Union State gives advantages in receiving a residence permit and citizenship," notes Mr. Rapota. "Ideally, we'll have single citizenship — it's something we aspire to."

Some were born, some became more mature and some grew older



Average age of urbanities in the country is lower than that of rural residents

By Yevgenia Platova

The average age of a Belarusian resident is 39.7 years: 38.3 in cities and 44 years in villages.

"Since 1990, the average age of the Belarusian population has been rising," notes Yelena Kukharevich,

the Deputy Chair of the National Statistical Committee of Belarus. "Over the last decade, residents here have become older by 1.9 years (men by 1.7 years and women by 2.1 years). Over the same period, the average urbanite has become older by 2.5 years while the average

rural resident has become older by 1.5 years."

According to Ms. Kukharevich, the Vitebsk Region has the oldest population (average age of 41.1 years) while the youngest are in Minsk (average of 38 years). The average age of Belarusian men is

36.9 years while that of women is 42.1 years.

She adds that 60 percent of the total population are of employable age: as of early 2012, totalling 5.8m (down by 55,000 on last year). "The share of those of employable age is declining — and likely to continue doing so. The trend is due to fewer people having been born in the early 1990s, resulting in a shortfall of those of working age. Meanwhile, those born in the post-war years, when there was a 'baby boom', are now reaching pensionable age," explains Ms. Kukharevich.

She notes a 9,000 rise among those below employable age. As of January 1st, 2012, this group amounted to 1.5m (16 percent of the total population). The rise is connected with women born in the 1980s (when there was a rather high birth rate) entering child-bearing age.

Those above employable age have risen in number (in 2011, by almost 30,000). The share of the aging population is rising in Belarus. According to UN classification, if those aged over 65 account for 7 percent of the population, the population of a country is considered to be old. "Back in the 1950s, we had already exceeded this figure and, by early 2012, this had neared 14 percent. Against our background of low birth rates and rising average life expectancy, the population of Belarus will continue to grow older," Ms. Kukharevich admits.

Fans pleased with traffic

Railway carriers of Ukraine, Poland, Russia and Belarus to increase number of trains for 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, with corresponding memorandum signed by our four countries in Warsaw.

According to the agreement, each side will organise additional passenger trains to transport fans between the cities of Russia, Ukraine, Be-



Railway to help fans

larus and Poland. Moreover, customs and border proce-

dures are to be improved for guests of EURO-2012, with transport between Russia and Poland especially developed for passengers visiting the event.

In total, 42 trains will run from Russia to Poland during EURO-2012, crossing Belarus, with 18 additional trains operating between Ukraine and Poland.

Even more trains may be organised if necessary.

Customs Union open for new members

Ukrainian business keen to integrate into Customs Union

Ukrainian businesses are keen to see their country join the Customs Union (created by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan), notes the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Customs Union Suppliers Association, Oleg Noginsky. He was speaking at a conference entitled *Risks of Economic Disintegration and the Search for New Formats of Co-*

operation between Ukraine and the Eurasian Union, hosted by Kiev.

"We'd like politicians to listen to businesses, hearing their ideas. Integration into the Customs Union is rather interesting for businesses," notes Mr. Noginsky. He has also called on the Ukrainian Government to consider joining the Customs Union not from a political point of view but from the economic point of view. According to Mr. No-

ginsky, on joining the Customs Union, Ukraine would receive the right to develop technical regulations and would gain greater to Russian financial resources — as seen in Belarus and Kazakhstan. "Ukraine's membership of the Customs Union would also bring positive results within the Union; in raising its GDP 1.5-fold over the next decade, this would prove beneficial to the Customs Union," underlines Mr. Noginsky.

NEW DIMENSION

Das Wort, das Buch, Belaja Weshja

BELARUS

ASÍ ES LA REALIDAD GEOGRÁFICA

www.belarus-magazine.by