

Priorities specify course of action

By Denis Kopylov

St. Petersburg hosts Days of Belarusian Culture while Governor Georgy Poltavchenko visits Minsk, brightly illustrating multi-faceted interaction between the Russian northern capital and Belarus

The delegation arriving in Minsk looked at a wide range of issues: from culture and arts to serious joint business projects. Speaking to President Lukashenko, Mr. Poltavchenko discussed the shared characteristics of residents of Belarus and St. Petersburg. Mr. Lukashenko primarily noted our shared mid-20th century war time history, since Leningrad was affected especially severely. Like Belarusians, they suffered greatly and emerged stronger.

Meanwhile, Mr. Poltavchenko recollected that Leningrad architects placed their soul into rebuilding Minsk, having helped re-



Mr. Georgy Poltavchenko

store the post-war city, which was burnt to ashes. We became strong friends long ago, so it's only fitting that we continue, collaborating where possible. The Belarusian President stressed, "We've never separated ourselves from Russia — let alone, from Leningrad-St. Petersburg. This is sacred for us."

He added that, in Soviet times, Belarus, Leningrad and Moscow were connected by the closest ties of co-operation. Our food supplies served these two most important Russian cities. "I believe, we have great experience in this respect. We shouldn't move away

from this; rather, we should restore it," he emphasised, outlining prospects.

Mr. Lukashenko underlined that Belarus is ready for any form of collaboration with St. Petersburg — not only regarding sales but joint manufacturing in all branches: agriculture, machine building and science-intensive sphere. The Belarusian Head of State was concise and unambiguous in noting, "At present, St. Petersburg needs to interact with Belarus in particular areas. You should describe your interests clearly, so that we can consider them immediately and make decisions."

Mr. Poltavchenko picked up on the topic of food supplies, as St. Petersburg experiences some problems in this area. Large trading chains play decisive role on local food market, with imports forming the bulk of wholesale purchases. Belarusian products are the most superior in quality, as St. Petersburg residents are

well aware. Accordingly, an agreement to open up new opportunities for the supply of Belarusian food products to St. Petersburg may solve the problem.

Many other mutually interesting topics were to the fore — including the creation of strong transport and logistics structures and collaboration in passenger travel. St. Petersburg's Governor is confident that our liaisons will be extensive, "The most vital thing is to ensure that our potential develops further; we have the chance to trade while creating science-intensive produce. We have real opportunities for co-operation."

Evidently, Belarusian-Russian relations are intensifying at regional and top levels, as proven by the recent CSTO and CIS summits in Moscow and the decision of Vladimir Putin in selecting Minsk for his first official visit as president. The strategic interest of both countries lies in constructive partnership.

Traffic volumes through Balkans to expand

By Mikhail Sviridenko

Transport departments of Belarus and Serbia agree to promote international automobile transportation co-operation

Terms have been discussed at recent talks between our two countries in Belgrade. The two sides have shared information on international automobile transportation between our countries and the number of trips by Belarusian and Serbian haulers, while tackling prospects for collaboration in 2013. Taking into account the needs of Belarusian and Serbian forwarding agencies, the delegates have agreed cargo transportation quotas for 2012 and a preliminary quota for 2013.

During negotiations, the two sides mentioned the lack of bus services between our countries as, at present, no bus route exists between Belarus and Serbia. Our transport authorities are each keen to take steps to promote co-operation in international automobile passenger transportation by road, setting final quotas for 2012 and a preliminary quota for 2013.

Belarus has submitted a new draft bilateral intergovernmental agreement on international automobile transportation for consideration by the Serbian Infrastructure and Energy Ministry, which assures us that it will be reviewed soon.

Denomination to come later

By Vladimir Trifonov

Deputies of National Assembly's House of Representatives adopt alterations to Banking Code of Belarus at first reading

The Chair of the National Bank's Board, Nadezhda Yermakova, answered some questions by parliamentarians and citizens at the reading of the alterations to the Banking Code. She noted that, this year, no denomination of the Belarusian Rouble will be conducted, as there is no need. However, the preparation for it may be launched already in 2013. "Taking into consideration people's growing incomes and money flow, the enhanced development of the Belarusian economy and rising production, we believe we may need to begin preparing for new denomination issue in 2013. It's a serious task, since new notes have to be printed," she asserts.

As regards the refinancing rate, the issue is to come under consideration in the near future. "It must be positive — being higher than inflation in its average-annum calculation (we use the IMF method of calculation)," Ms. Yermakova notes. If monthly inflation reaches 2 percent, then the refinancing rate may drop by approximately 2 interest points as well.



Over 50 investment projects presented at Gomel Investment Forum

International business meetings set records

International Spring in Gomel Universal Fair — the largest in the region — brings together over 250 enterprises from CIS states and beyond

By Vasily Dikunov

The 9th Gomel Economic Forum, which took place at the same time, was attended by representatives of around 30 countries: the broadest yet. Alongside traditional partners, new businessmen from Ireland, Lebanon, Azerbaijan and a range of other states attended, showing rising interest in the forum. The first events only

gathered representatives of diplomatic missions; now, companies and firms are eager to take part.

Guests were able to study various proposals: over 160 investment projects, 80 free land lots and 70 property sites. The spheres of application cover everything from industry to tourism. Moreover, new areas appeared at the forum: alternative power engineering and small-sized businesses.

As far as strategic projects in the Gomel Region are concerned, these primarily include the industrial development of the Petrikov potash salts deposit, with the construction of mining and processing facilities — as presented by Belaruskali JSC (keenly seeking a partner). Draft projects on the organisation of calcinated salt production in the Mozyr District and energy-sav-

ing glass at Gomelsteklo JSC were also presented.

While some companies arrived in Gomel to see the potential of the region, others may come to sign treaties. Projects to be implemented immediately after the forum include 'solar parks' in the Bragin and Yelsk districts — where Irish investors plan to set up solar powered batteries as an alternative energy source.