

# Features of common holiday

Chairman of Supreme State Council of Union State, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, congratulates Belarusians and Russians on Day of Unity of Peoples of Belarus and Russia

In his congratulation, Mr. Lukashenko noted that Unity Day occupies a special place among the many public holidays in the year. The greeting reads: 'It comes from the will of our brotherly nations to unite efforts and jointly create our future. It is deeply symbolic that, against the background of 1990s centrifugal tendencies within the whole post-Soviet space, only we — Belarusians and Russians — have managed to lay the foundations of unity on a new historical stage, overcoming massive external pressure.

Since that time, our countries have come a long way; Belarusian-Russian integration has been successfully implemented in contemporary large-scale projects, such as the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. It will guide us towards our next goal — the Eurasian Union. We'll create new organisational forms and a further level of integration; however, the historical decision of our nations — adopted 17 years ago — will remain the foundation of these processes.'

The President of Belarus notes that

bilateral trade now exceeds \$43bn. His greeting continues: 'We're jointly building a nuclear power station and mastering space together, while efficiently uniting our potential in the sphere of science. We're implementing joint projects across various branches — from industry and agriculture to education and social services. We're systematically co-operating in the spheres of foreign and defence policy so, despite new threats and instability worldwide, we can look confidently to the future. Most vitally, citizens of our

states don't feel like foreign aliens in Belarus or Russia.'

Mr. Lukashenko believes that further rapprochement is essential in today's world, emphasising: 'The results of the session of the Supreme State Council of the Union State have confirmed our readiness to continue developing this integration. We'll clearly determine its renewed priorities and will fix concrete goals, to make the Union State even more efficient in promoting the well-being of our people. I'm convinced that

joint, purposeful work is the way to fully realising our existing potential, ensuring the competitiveness of our national economies and sustainable growth, while guaranteeing a worthy standing of living. I'm confident that the heartfelt aspiration of our people for joint dynamic development will be successfully brought to life.'

Mr. Lukashenko wishes all Belarusians and Russians health, happiness and prosperity. His greeting ends: 'May our countries' inviolable, strategic partnerships grow ever stronger!'

## Example of beneficial interaction

**Integration aims to promote people's standard of living in Belarus and Russia, notes Russian President Vladimir Putin in congratulatory message to President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, on Day of Unity of Peoples of Belarus and Russia**

Mr. Putin stressed, "Russia and Belarus are successfully developing mutually beneficial co-operation in a range of fields and constructive partnership in international affairs, while relying on glorious past traditions and the strong bonds of friendship and cultural and spiritual solidarity which have linked our two nations for centuries."

Mr. Putin praised the positive outcomes of the Union State Supreme Council session, held on March 15th in St. Petersburg, and expressed confidence that integration processes will contribute to promoting the welfare of Russians and Belarusians. He sees today's integration establishing favourable conditions for the foundation of the Eurasian Economic Union.

## Fascinating phenomenon

**More Russians than ever choosing Belarus as their place of residence. The State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota, announced the news at a press conference in Moscow, dedicated to the Day of Unity of Peoples of Belarus and Russia.**

Mr. Rapota is convinced that the provision of equal rights for Belarusians and Russians plays a significant role in this trend. He notes that unresolved issues exist, such as access to health care. Those who relocate permanently are eligible, but those staying temporarily are not currently covered; legislation is being drafted to solve this problem and that of access to education and pensions (particularly for the military).

At present, 20,000 Belarusians study in Russia, while 2,000 Russians attend Belarusian universities. "Technological issues remain regarding university entry, so we need citizens to understand how to access their equal rights to education. There's a unified state exam in Russia and centralised testing in Belarus," adds Mr. Rapota.



Belarus ranked 50th among 187 countries for its human development index

# Leader of CIS countries

Belarus moves up fifteen positions in UN rankings for its high human development index

By Yuri Chernyakevich

It's perhaps nonsensical to compare life in the USA with, for example, that in tiny Luxembourg, or that of Russia with Denmark. We all know that the 'grass is always greener on the other side' but there are some standard criteria which can be used to assess living standards around the world.

Not long ago, the United Nations published its report entitled *The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. It noted that, last year, every country, without exception, accelerated its pace of growth in the field of education and health care, as well as increasing its incomes. However, the greatest re-

sults were seen in the 'States of the South': China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, the Republic of South Africa and Turkey. For the first time, the combined GDP of the three leading economies in the developing world — Brazil, India and China — nearly equalled that of those countries traditionally recognised as industrially developed in the 'North': Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the USA and France.

Belarus is ranked 50th (among 187 countries) for its human development index: the leading position in the CIS. Moreover, over the past year, the country has risen fifteen positions and is recognised as having high human development index. In comparison, Russia is rated 55th, Kazakhstan

is 69th, Georgia is ranked 72nd, Ukraine is 78th and Armenia is placed 87th.

It's a pretty significant jump for our country, although, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, the rise was expected, confirming the wisdom of the state's social and economic policies. The Head of the Economic Co-operation and Sustainable Development Office of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Yuri Yaroshevich, recently noted at a press conference in Minsk, "This index is one of the most important in the world. It assesses living standards in a particular country, literacy and GDP per capita. We treat it as a measure of how successfully fundamental human rights are im-

plemented in various countries."

A great many reports exist, but the UN's human development report is interesting in that its basic indicators give a clear picture of a nation's development. The latest such report notes that Belarusians are now staying in education at least an extra two years on average.

Of course, our country is known for its focus in this direction, with domestic and foreign experts asserting that education is developing dynamically. The human development index is prestigious worldwide and, according to Mr. Yaroshevich, shows the opportunities and potential of the economy, guiding business representatives thinking of making investments.

# Traders take fancy to network

**Number of domestic online vendors increasing daily**

According to the Deputy Trade Minister, Irina Narkevich, speaking at the First Industry E-Commerce eTRADE Conference, over 5,000 online-shops were operational in

Belarus in early April.

Only last year, the number of such virtual shops rose by twenty percent; in the first quarter of this year, their number increased by another six percent and, according to the Deputy Minister, further

growth is likely. All the necessary legislation is ready for the development of Internet trading in Belarus.

Mikhail Makhtadui, who heads the Internet Tax Control Section Ministry for Taxes and Duties,

notes that his department keeps a check on violations — such as owners lacking documents confirming the legality of imported goods. "If such violations are detected, the business entities are brought to task," asserts Mr. Makhtadui.