



Serik Akhmetov

By Mikhail Veniaminov

On meeting Kazakhstan's Prime Minister, Serik Akhmetov, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has proposed expanding Belarus' participation in the industrialisation of the Kazakh economy.

"Belarus has established a very promising organisation with Kazakhstan and Russia, which I hope will help our nations' citizens. I absolutely agree with Nursultan Nazarbayev that our organisation shouldn't be po-

Integration action plan

Belarus and Kazakhstan could raise bilateral turnover considerably over coming years

liticalised," notes Mr. Lukashenko. "We aren't in a hurry, so we can solve current problems calmly, enabling us to move on in mastering new processes and solving new problems."

The Belarusian President notes that the SES is already seeing results, including increased bilateral collaboration. In 2012, trade turnover between Belarus and Kazakhstan totalled around \$1bn. "Once, we only dreamt of such figures; now, they're a reality," the Head of State emphasises. "I believe that Belarusians need to work more actively to help industrialise the Kazakh economy, since it's beneficial for us."

According to Mr. Lukashenko,

Kazakhstan is also keen on such co-operation, having always promoted it. He also stresses that Belarusian goods are good value for money. "If you need something, we can deliver it. Kazakhstan isn't a stranger to us; rather, it's a rich and promising country with a great future. Interaction with Kazakhstan benefits our state and our people," continues the Belarusian leader.

Mr. Lukashenko notes that Belarus is searching for new sales markets for its produce far beyond its borders but sometimes forgets that it does have closer markets. He emphasises also that the economies of Belarus and Kazakhstan are complementary.

On May 29th, Kazakhstan is to host a top level meeting within the SES framework, discussing the intensive development of integration processes. Serik Akhmetov agrees that foundations need to be laid, allowing us to move forward steadily and consistently.

Mr. Akhmetov believes that existing bilateral trade of \$1bn could be raised further, saying, "We have huge potential and should at least double trade over the next few years." He adds that processed and agricultural goods dominate. "We need to set up joint ventures in most branches of the economy, then export widely," underlines Mr. Akhmetov.

Something to discuss

Belarusian-Ukrainian top level meetings scheduled for May

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, recently enjoyed a telephone conversation with the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. The heads of state noted the successful development of trade-economic relations between our two countries. Belarusian-Ukrainian turnover reached a record \$7.9bn last year (up 27 percent on 2011) with Belarus seeing a trade surplus of over \$3bn.

Major bilateral projects are being implemented in the fuel and energy sphere and through joint assembly and production: with Minsk Tractor Works, Gomselmash, Minsk Automobile Works and other enterprises.

The presidents also discussed obstacles to bilateral relationships, agreeing on a top level meeting to be held in May, to tackle these issues. The launch of a Belarus-Ukraine-Russia social initiative will be high on the agenda at the May meeting.

Gateway to Asia opens in Singapore

President Lukashenko meets Speaker of Singapore Parliament, Halimah Yacob, in Minsk, finding that Belarusian initiatives are well received in South-East Asia

By Vladimir Khodasevich

Mr. Lukashenko has confirmed Belarus' interest in developing co-operation with Southeast Asian nations during his meeting with the Parliamentary Speaker of the Republic of Singapore, Mdm. Halimah Yacob.

"We are actively working in the region, with Singapore and Indonesia in particular, and with all of Southeast Asia in general. We have major interests there," notes the Head of State.

"Since Singapore is a gateway

to Southeast Asia, I hope our co-operation will bring a huge positive effect in the future," continues the President of Belarus. He stresses that the March visit of the Belarusian delegation to Singapore was of great importance for the country. "I recall with significant pleasure my visit to Singapore; we really learnt a lot there," adds Mr. Lukashenko.

The Belarusian leader believes that Mdm. Yacob's visit will help develop bilateral relations. He con-



Halimah Yacob

veyed his good wishes to the President and Prime Minister of Singapore, on behalf of the Belarusian people, and expressed his hope that

they will also visit Belarus.

Mdm. Yacob notes that Singapore and Belarus enjoy friendly relations, which grew stronger during the Belarusian President's visit to Singapore. She stresses that a key area of collaboration is trade and investment, with bilateral agreements and memoranda signed at the recent Singapore business forum. Several documents aim to inspire economic partnerships between our two states, building upon past agreements to supply tyres, BelAZ heavy-duty dump trucks and potash fertilisers to Singapore and neighbouring states, as well as the setting up of an assembly production line of BelAZ vehicles in Singapore.

Mdm. Yacob's visit to Belarus is her first to our country and, undoubtedly, brings a new phase in developing our relations.

Yosef Shagal in positive mood

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Israel to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Yosef Shagal, hopes to see the regime between our two states abolished this year. He explains that a corresponding agreement may be signed during a visit by the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, to Belarus, in the year of his 90th birthday. "Very soon, the issue on abolishing the visa regime should be solved. However, even if the President isn't able to come to Belarus, we won't cease our visa negotiations; we'll keep up our active work."

Chernobyl: no right to be forgotten

Twenty seven years have passed since the moment when ancient Slavonic word 'Chernobyl' represented more than a simple weed and a town in Ukrainian Polesie. It has acquired new meaning and is now associated with suffering and tragedy, while standing as a warning.

By Yuri Chernyakevich

It's impossible to forget that the lives of thousands of Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians changed forever on April 26th, 1986: for them, time is separated into 'before' and 'after', being forced to leave their beloved homes almost three decades ago.

Of course, few recall Chernobyl with the horror felt in the late 1980s. A year ago, I took part in a two-day international press tour, looking at how the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster have been tackled. Journalists, including those from Russia and Ukraine, visited the Belarusian cities of Gomel, Vetka and Chechersk, viewing farmsteads and cattle-breeding farms, as well as medical and socio-cultural institutions in the region.

What we saw on that trip could have easily become the basis for a sociological survey, looking at how the media per-

ceives Chernobyl. Most of the journalists were interested in the quality of medical services provided to the population in affected areas and were keen to learn about scientific research at Gomel institutes.

I can't help but think that today's perceptions of the Chernobyl tragedy differ drastically from those evident immediately after the explosion at the fourth reactor. Over the past 27 years, Belarus has done much to minimise the consequences of the accident. According to the Emergency Ministry, the last state programme (2005-2010) saw over 1,000 flats built in affected territories, while clinics and schools were revamped. Moreover, dozens of thousands of children took recuperative trips abroad. Naturally, efforts continue.

The new, fifth, Chernobyl state programme focuses on the socio-economic development of affected areas, with new factories



On April 26th, Minsk commemorates victims of the Chernobyl accident

and modernised facilities providing employment.

Other parts of the world have since benefited from Belarus' experience in mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl catas-

trophe. Last year alone, over 30 delegations from Japan visited our country. Of course, they are now dealing with the aftermath of the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power station. Their in-

terest has covered measuring radiation, farming on contaminated territories and recuperative trips for children.

The state has borne major expenditure in its efforts to tackle the consequences of the Chernobyl tragedy, while international organisations have assisted: European partners, the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency have supported various Chernobyl programmes, with affected regions still receiving humanitarian help from charities.

A recent press conference in Minsk announced that a new programme is to be approved, continuing the mitigation of the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. The Belarus-Russia Union State budget is allocating over 1.4bn Russian Roubles, with funds primarily directed towards the purchase of the latest medical equipment for hospitals and children's rehabilitation-recuperative centres.