

Veterans in high spirits

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, wishes to see children take more responsibility for elderly parents, as he noted during his visit to the Republican House of War and Labour Veterans

By Vladimir Khromov

“We should oblige children to look after their elderly parents; if they don't wish to do so, they should pay for their care,” emphasised the head of state. The President has requested that existing legislation be assessed for provision. “If legislation is lacking, amendments should be made in the first half of the year to ensure that children take care for their parents,” he said.

Mr. Lukashenko notes that elderly people currently in state care will soon be assessed to see if children can be located, taking on their duties. As the Minister for Labour and Social Protection, Marianna Shchetkina, has reported, Belarus has 22 hostels for war and labour veterans, where residents are provided

with a home, a varied menu, clothing and shoes, and essential public services, besides 24 hour care and medical provision. Those without able-bodied family members or spouses are supported by the state. Where family exist, they pay for parents residing in nursing homes.

The Republican House of War and Labour Veterans, located in Zhdanovichi, has 166 residents — all of whom made a significant contribution during World War 2 and in the post-war years. “This is the only such institution within the CIS so we should preserve it, giving a home to those who gave so much for their country,” asserts Ms. Shchetkina. She notes that most of the residents have no family but places are occasionally made available to those with relatives, in return for pay-



Warm welcome for Alexander Lukashenko during visit to Republican House of War and Labour Veterans

ment. Currently, there are 47 such paying residents.

Mr. Lukashenko was interested to learn the problems of veterans living at the hostel but the Minister and the director of the hostel, as well as the residents themselves, assured him that life is very comfortable there.

The President toured the hostel, seeing the gym, swimming pool, living rooms, library and Great Patriotic War exhibition. The veterans then invited Mr. Lukashenko to drink tea with them and, in his honour, gave a programme of song, poetry and storytelling.

Mr. Lukashenko asserts that the state will continue doing everything possible to

ensure that the elderly have a decent life. “You are models for others, inspiring them to live and appreciate life,” he said.

One of the residents of the hostel lamented that no public holiday exists to mark the contribution of the partisans of WW2 so the President replied, “People certainly know of the contribution played by the partisans. Some are now trying to discredit the movement but, in our country, we have not allowed your deeds to be distorted.”

The hostel has been operational since 1974, having been built at the President's order. In 2011, its living areas were renovated and a clinic added. Work on the grounds

continues. Mr. Lukashenko stresses that all such work has been completed within strict budgets.

According to Ms. Shchetkina, the provision of social care is the main focus at present, with each region eager to provide support for the elderly at home, allowing them to stay in a familiar environment for as long as possible.

Mr. Lukashenko stresses that, this year, the Great Patriotic War Museum will be fully completed, including halls dedicated to the partisan movement. He notes, “It will be a grand museum: the most modern and majestic, so that people, who visit Minsk and enter the muse-

um, would understand what our nation has done for them to live. The Western Europe should realise that it owes its modern existence to us. They should remember our sacrifices and appreciate that they owe their lives to our resistance and determination. Occasionally, we Belarusians are blamed, which should stop. We haven't been paid for our contribution to the Great Patriotic War victory. You live thanks to many of our people dying.”

Mr. Lukashenko added that Belarus retains various Soviet era holidays, saying, “We're doing all we can to keep that period alive in the minds of today's younger people.”

Prices have become clear

By Yevgeny Pivovarov

Russian State Duma ratifies Belarusian-Russian inter-governmental agreement on natural gas supply tariffs for Belarus and transportation through gas pipelines located on our territory

The document has been supported by all 442 deputies who took part in voting. The Chairman of the Duma Committee for the CIS, Leo-

nid Slutsky, tells us, “The agreement finally stipulates the pricing formula for gas supplied to Belarus. The rough edges which have existed between our countries in this sphere have been removed. Ratifying the agreement, we'll take a step towards truly creating the Single Economic Space.”

The State Secretary and Russian Deputy Energy Minister, Yuri Sentyurin, explains that the pricing formula for gas deliveries to Belarus comprises the gas price paid by consumers in the

Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District plus transportation and storage costs.

In 2012, the gas price for Belarus stood at \$165.6 per 1,000 cubic metres. For future years, price rises will only reflect inflation, emphasises Mr. Sentyurin. He adds, “This is significantly lower than world prices.”

The agreement also stipulates procedures for calculating the cost of transporting natural gas via Beltransgas JSC pipelines — for domestic consumption and beyond.

Every guest is welcome

By Eduard Pimenov

Christmas Fair in St. Petersburg hosts Day of Belarus

The Christmas Fair has enjoyed its seventh year in the northern Russian capital. This year, the major cultural and charity event was organised with an international format under a slogan from Pushkin: ‘All flags are visiting us’.

Nineteen countries shared their national New Year and Christmas

traditions — including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, the UK, Germany, India, Spain, Italy, China, Lithuania, Slovakia, the USA, Ukraine, Finland, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Sweden.

The solemn opening ceremony of the Day of the Republic featured the Governor of St. Petersburg, Georgy Poltavchenko, who praised the mutually beneficial partnership between Belarus and St. Petersburg. The Chairman of the Fair's Organising Committee, Nikolay Yakov-

lev, noted the wide range of goods presented by Belarus. Minsk and Borisov meat packing plant foods enjoyed great popularity, as did confectionary from Minsk's Kommunarka, goods from Bobruisk's Krasny Pishchevik and Smolevichi's felt boots.

Belarusian pop star Georgy Koldun gave performances, as did *Bely Ptakh* and *Belye Rosy* folk groups. The Day of Belarus finished with a folk festival, karaoke and New Year disco.

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