

High style of diplomacy

Developing interaction with China is a priority of Belarusian foreign policy

By Vladimir Khromov

On meeting the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Gong Jianwei, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko emphasised that Belarus is proud of its relations with China: a great power. The meeting was dedicated to Mr. Jianwei's two-year diplomatic mission to Belarus coming to an end: a special honour extended only to those whom the President believes have really worked to nurture mutual relations with Belarus, showing themselves as a true friend of the state. Mr. Jianwei helped arrange the Belarusian President's visit to the People's Republic of China this year, with a joint declaration between Minsk and Beijing being signed to set up major strategic partnerships.

The President stressed, "We're proud of having such good relations with this great state. These relations began long ago when China was getting back on its feet. Back then, during the development of China, we saw beginnings worthy of attention and we've since learned much from the People's Republic of China."

The President reminded that, as a Member of Parliament, he recommended examining Chinese experience. He recalled, "We've studied China's experience attentively



Alexander Lukashenko meets Chinese Ambassador, marking the end of his diplomatic mission

and I believe we've chosen the right policy. We already enjoy a long history of relations with this nation." He underlined that the Ambassador of China 'has been a reliable friend and has tried to cement relations between our two countries — unlike some other ambassadors, who do totally the opposite!' Mr. Lukashenko hopes that

the experience and knowledge gained by Mr. Jianwei in Belarus will allow him to continue promoting stronger Belarus-China relations.

According to the President, every Belarusian is aware of positive Belarus-China co-operation. He stresses, "China is not the future of the planet but its present." He believes that making deci-

sions on global and regional matters would be impossible without taking into account China's view. He is delighted at the progress made in Belarus' interaction with China — especially over the last two years — and recognises Mr. Jianwei's role in promoting our friendship.

Mr. Jianwei thanked the Belarusian President for his

positive assessment of his work, noting, "I accept this not only as personal praise but as praise of China's leadership and Government." He added that China intends to fulfil all the agreements with Belarus signed during the recent meeting between President Lukashenko and the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping.

Homeland remembers them

House of Representatives of National Assembly adopts bill on Belarusians living abroad at first reading

The document aims to encourage Belarusians living abroad (yet having no Belarusian passport) to gain Belarusian citizenship, by offering privileged terms; the usual seven years of stay in Belarus will be either reduced or completely abolished.

The bill clearly defines who is eligible among those residing permanently outside the country: citizens of the Republic of Belarus; and foreign citizens and stateless persons born in Belarus (if they themselves or their direct ancestors were born or resided on the territory of Belarus); and foreign citizens and stateless persons who identify themselves as Belarusians (in terms of ethnic affiliation with the Belarusian nation or language, culture, historical ties, or knowledge and preservation of Belarusian traditions and customs).

According to various estimates, there are at least 1.5 million Belarusians worldwide, with the largest community found in Russia. According to some estimates, approximately one million Belarusians reside there. About 200,000 Belarusians live in Poland, around 100,000 in Kazakhstan, 96,000 in Latvia, and 95,000 in Lithuania.

Shift in deadline for site

By Yuri Bystrov

Council of Ministers' Presidium considers state of timber processing enterprises, taking into account President's critique

Belarusian Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikovich has noted that the Government is obliged to complete modernisation of timber processing enterprises within the terms outlined by the Head of State. In particular, this refers to nine enterprises where works should be finished this year and in H1 of 2014. The PM emphasises that another shift in the deadline is out of the question, since this results in extra costs and brings difficulties relating to sales: especially, export supplies. "Contemporary timber processing is vital to the country's GDP, being our equivalent of oil or gas resources," said Mr. Myasnikovich. The more processing that can be achieved, the greater the 'added-value' and profit.

Election campaign starts in December

By Vasily Kharitonov

Elections to local Councils of Deputies planned for March 23rd, as approved by President Alexander Lukashenko, meeting Chair of Central Commission for Elections and National Referenda of the Republic of Belarus, Lidia Yermoshina

Not so long ago, the abolition of village councils was debated and rejected, with the view that such councils make decisions on many daily questions of relevance, providing a reliable link between central power and society.

Following local elections in 2015, the presidential election campaign is to begin. In 2016, people will elect Deputies to the House of Representatives. Naturally, the political and social stability of society relies on democratic processes and the state's strategy of development will be guided by the results. The coming elections are to follow the Government's newly ap-



International observers at polling station

proved electoral legislation, signed off by the Head of State, which aims to make campaigning more open,

competitive and emulative.

The President stresses, "The loss of three years of development would be cata-

strophic, so we must take elections seriously, preparing with care. It's desirable that these elections demonstrate true democracy, allowing people to define who will govern them and the state, how the country will develop and in what direction. This is my unshakeable opinion." He adds that the present head of the Central Election Commission will continue to organise and oversee political campaigns.

Regarding the financing of elections, the President warns that no 'superfluous money' exists, but that those invited to work during this period should be adequately paid. "People engaged in election work should be paid appropriately but we shouldn't keep people away from their primary jobs for too long, rather using Government agencies for the bulk of the work; they should use state money allocated for their operation. Of course, those involved in election work should be paid adequately. If we want quality, we must be ready to

pay accordingly," noted the Head of State.

The date of local Councils of Deputies elections was discussed at a meeting between the President and the Chair of the Central Election Commission. According to Lidia Yermoshina, the term of their powers expires on April 25th and, according to the Constitution, the next elections must take place no later than 30 days before the expiration of this term. Mr. Lukashenko has approved elections being held on March 23rd 2014.

The MT's reference:

The election campaign to local Councils of Deputies is to begin by December 24th of this year, at the latest, notes the Secretary of the Central Election Commission, Nikolai Lozovik. He tells us, "As soon as the decree is published, the election campaign will begin." Election committees will soon be formed, with nominations for candidates held alongside propaganda campaigns, voting and summarising.