



Officially

Alexander Lukashenko took part in the official reception in Sochi, arranged on behalf of the President of Russia for high-ranking guests of the 22nd Winter Olympic Games.

The President of Belarus talked with leaders from a range of CIS and non-CIS states, as well as with the leadership of the International Olympic Committee. Mr. Lukashenko also had a constructive conversation with the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, which tackled the most acute issues of their bilateral co-operation, with the Belarusian President inviting the Chinese leader to visit Belarus on an official visit.

Land which is both close and remote

By Vladimir Khromov

A couple of years ago, few could have imagined that Belarus would enjoy close ties with Russia's Amur Region, even despite the great distance which separates Minsk from Blagoveshchensk. However, efficient business ties confirm that the modern world is narrowing.

Distance no longer plays a decisive role in the establishment of useful partnerships. In 2012, our mutual turnover demonstrated a vigorous growth. Actually, the trend could have continued last year, if it were not for the flooding which affected the Amur area and therefore some business projects. But life goes on. The two sides are still interested

in fruitful liaisons, as is seen from the recent talks between the Belarusian President and the Amur Region Governor, Oleg Kozhemyako.

Battling the consequences of the flooding was a key topic. In this respect, Alexander Lukashenko stressed, "You should know that, in hard times, I have ordered that the Government must react to any of your requests. However, not everything has been realised to the full, due to the long distance. If we can mend the situation now, then let's do this. If we can agree to settle the issue by spring or summer, you simply need to tell us. We'll then work hard in this area. You are not alien for us. We are proud that a geographically remote region is actually close to us. We'll always accept your proposals of co-operation."

Mr. Kozhemyako thanked Belarus for its support in hard times, noting, "The humanitarian cargo came in good time and that aid was distributed among those in need. The move contributed to our relations and our citizens felt that a fraternal nation lives in your country, which renders assistance in times of hardship."

Apart from humanitarian aid, the region is in need of assistance in ensuring its further economic development. Mr. Kozhemyako informed the President that there is a shortage of accommodation for forcibly displaced people. On hearing that, the President said that Belarus produces high-quality wooden houses which can save the situation. The Governor showed interest in the idea and proposed to allocate a territory for turn-key construction of accom-

modation by Belarusian specialists. The project is undergoing discussion now.

Belarusians have also been invited to participate in another major project — the construction of the Vostochny space-launch complex in the Amur Region (including infrastructure and accommodation). This long-term project would involve many orders, and Minsk is truly interested in the idea.

In addition, the guest loved the Belarusian experience of building dairy commodity complexes, and felt the idea could be realised in the Amur Region. The sides are also eager to develop their traditional projects in the sphere of industrial co-operation, such as the assembly of Belarusian agricultural, communal and road machinery.

Books come to visit

By Veniamin Mikhalev

Last week, flags from 26 countries flapped in the chill February air, their movement reflected in the glass façade of the National Exhibition Centre, BelExpo. With around six hundred exhibitors, there was enough variety for those hunting for interesting publications, and that's without the 170 events that were scheduled in the program.

However, the event wasn't limited to the walls of just one location. For example, the Academy of Public Administration under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus hosted the presentation of books of the legendary series *Lives of Remarkable People*, from the Moscow Publishing House, Molodaya Gvardiya. The winners of the 53rd *Art of Book* National Contest received their awards in the Palace of the Republic. The round table 'Creative Connections of Writers of Belarus and Russia Today' was held in the Union of Writers of Belarus.

But here, in the building in the Yanka Kupala Street was a real freedom for book lovers. The central exposition was made in the form of an open book, a symbol of communion with spirituality and an invitation to co-operate, with the publishers' stands resembling these symbols. It is not a coincidence, as the First Deputy Information Minister Lilia Ananich, explained, "The best slogan for the exhibition will be 'In the Year of Hospitality, all books are our guests, all countries are welcome!' An open book is an open country."

Of course, the central exposition contained a tribute to a man, thanks to whom we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of printing in 2017 — the Polotsk citizen, Frantsisk Skarina.

A number of exhibitions immediately drew attention, namely *Memory. To the 70th anniversary of the Liberation of Belarus* and *Hockey Minsk. Book and Sport*, where one could see real rarities from the collections of the Book Chamber.

The fair is created for both that wish to see, and for those looking to purchase books. The fact that Belarusian books are in demand is confirmed each year by the amount of



Vladimir Likhodedov's exhibition, dedicated to his *In Search of the Lost* project, attracts visitors' attention



Happy hunting ground for book lovers

activity of the buyers. The Executive Director of the exhibition, Alexander Vashkevich, is happy that sales at the exhibition are growing, "Here, one can buy the best works of Belarusian authors, both on the stands of publishers, and in the department of the central bookstore, especially since there is a chance to buy them at lower prices because of the system of discounts.

The second floor of the exhibition centre was like a time machine. One climbed the stairs and stepped into the past: old postcards with

images of Belarus, an old printing press, exhibits from the World War I and much more. In front of us there was an exhibition dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the joint project of the laureate of the Presidential Award 'For Spiritual Revival', Vladimir Likhodedov, the newspapers *SB. Belarus Segodnya* and *Zvyazda* Publishing House. Here was a unique opportunity to see exhibits from the country's only museum of the World War I in the village, Zabrodie, created by the artist Boris Tsitovich, made more poignant

by the fact that this year marks one hundred years since the beginning of the conflict. Postcards from his collection allowed you to look at it from both sides of the barricades. Here is a downed Russian plane; there is a German one... It is interesting to trace on the photos, how the appearance of our cities have changed, to find out what were the key buildings of the old days.

And here is another surprise. It is unlikely that many people have had a chance to flip through the pages of rare, 12th century manuscripts, but a facsimile edition of the Polotsk Gospel allowed everyone to do it. This volume was on a pedestal and was accessible to anyone. And there, wearing a bright blue and white sports uniform, young hockey players happily showed exemplars of the *Encyclopaedia of Hockey*, a wonderful gift for the upcoming World Championship, which will take place in Belarus later this year.

Minsk International Fair in the Year of Hospitality opened new perspectives for cultural and business co-operation. This point was stressed by the President of Belarus in his welcome to the participants of the 21st international book forum.

Important event in book art

By Andrey Fiodorov

Polotsk Gospel awarded Grand Prix of 53rd National Art of Book Contest

The *Art of Book* National Contest was founded in 1960 and sums up the results of work by Belarusian book publishers. The aim of the event is to determine the best publishing projects that contribute to the art and culture of book publishing in Belarus, to promote the development of book publishing and popularise the best book projects in the country.

The awards ceremony of the 53rd *Art of Book* National Contest was held in the Palace of the Republic. Since 2012, the books submitted for the contest have been first examined by a panel of prominent art experts, comprising of prominent masters in book art. The next stage is the meeting of the jury panel composed of outstanding figures of science and culture. Thirty-one publishing houses with 134 high-quality editions took part in the 53rd contest.

The top prize was awarded to the Polotsk Gospel, issued by the Belarusian Exarchate publishing house. The book collections *Maladzik* and *The Golden Collection of the Belarusian Literature* by the Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House were named winners in the 'LIT-Farmat' nomination (literary art). The awards in the 'We're Growing Together with the Book' nomination (books for children and youngsters) went to a series of books entitled *To Our Children* and *A Friend* by Rygor Borodulin, alongside *Don't Listen to Mishka, Kitty* by Raisa Borovikova.

The award in the 'Photo View' nomination went to the Belarus Publishing House for its *Minsk. The Heart of Belarus* photo album, while the award in the 'Golden Tables' nomination (reference and encyclopedic literature) was presented to Leonid Moryakov's *Main Street of Minsk, 1880-1940*. Meanwhile, the winners in the 'Art Books' nomination (fine art editions, reprints, facsimile, and bibliophilic publications) were Vladimir Stepan's *Teacher*, Sergei Petrovich Katkov and Syarzhuk Tsimokhau.