

Criteria must remain constant

Veniamin Minin

New embassies of Belarus abroad must only open where they are serving economic interests, emphasises Head of State, speaking to Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei

President Lukashenko has reminded the Foreign Minister that foreign policy should not change, with economic interests to the fore.

He stresses, "Recently, it has been suggested that we launch a number of embassies abroad. I'm not against this but they should open exclusively with this aim. We don't need to engage in general global policy. Rather, only if we have economic interest in a particular country, in terms of diversification of exports and foreign trade, we should engage there."

The Head of State asked Mr. Makei to report in brief on foreign

policy results, with reference to the major meeting planned with Belarus' ambassadors abroad this summer. "There will come a time when we'll seriously talk about the results of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' works: for last year, and in general," said the President.

Mr. Makei reported that the Foreign Ministry Collegium recently summed up results and set tasks for 2014. He admitted that

half of the five-dozen Belarusian embassies abroad have failed to meet targets concerning the development of exports and attraction of investments. "Assessment of the central office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our foreign establishments is absolutely critical," he noted. "A corresponding order for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will soon be prepared, acting upon our conclusions."

Comandante as symbol of revolution

Ivan Yefimov

Embassy of Venezuela commemorates Hugo Chávez in Belarus

International commemorative events are taking place in many countries, at the initiative of the Venezuelan government. For a whole month, ending on March 5th, the anniversary of the death of Hugo Chávez will be marked by events organised by Venezuelan legations, non-governmental organisations and social movements worldwide.

The Embassy of Venezuela in Belarus has prepared a major programme in tribute to the memory of the leader of the Bolivarian Revolution, who was a friend of the Belarusian people. Lectures are to be given at higher educational establishments, while art contests are planned for children and teenagers, as well as an essay competition on the theme 'Chávez in Belarus'. *Five Years — Five Visits* exhibition of photos features shots of Mr. Chávez in Belarus, hosted by the National Library of Belarus.

Investment gathering speed

Stadler Rail Group held up as an example to other foreign investors in Belarus

By Vladimir Khromov

Stadler Rail Group is one of the leading European manufacturers of railway rolling stock, with the company's goods used around the world: in Australia, Austria, Algeria, Belarus, Germany, Greece, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, the USA, Finland, France, the Czech Republic and Estonia.

All possible assistance is to be provided to the Swiss company to aid the joint venture in Belarus, as President Alexander Lukashenko assured the company's Director General, Peter Spuhler, during a recent meeting. He emphasised, "We're ready to seriously participate in developing your business in Belarus: to make it a true Belarusian-Swiss brand. We know how to work, our machine-building industry is well-developed and your technologies can help it further — here, within Belarus, and across the whole Customs Space."

Mr. Lukashenko believes that much has been achieved regarding co-operative development, stressing, "Our railway operator is already successfully using trains previously bought from Switzerland and which are now being produced in Belarus." Mr. Lukashenko explained that the meeting had been arranged in order to address some urgent issues concerning the project's implementation and strategy.

In line with previous arrangements, a factory making Belaru-



Stadler trains already successfully operating across country's railways

sian-Swiss products is being built in the Dzerzhinsk District. "We're very much interested in this, since your products being made in association with Belarus, on our territory, represent the future. A great number of customers are willing to buy them," added the President.

Peter Spuhler thanked Mr. Lukashenko for his significant support and, seizing the occasion, congratulated Belarus on winning five gold medals at the Sochi Olympics, primarily in the biathlon. He noted that a Swiss athlete came second in one of the races where Belarusians came first and third. "With Stadler as an example, we can combine our accomplishments and become leaders, together with Switzerland," noted the Head of State.

Mr. Spuhler informed the President about progress in constructing the factory and the administrative and manufacturing complex. In his words, the construction project is subdivided into three phases, with the first and second already active. "We'll be manufacturing products in Fanipol by early

April while the administrative building will be ready in August. Construction is moving fast with virtually no delay," Mr. Spuhler explained, adding that 70 Belarusian specialists are currently training in Switzerland, for welding of aluminium bodies. Later, another 50 specialists will follow them, to train for employment in the final assembly phase. When manufacturing begins in April 2014, the Swiss company will also lend specialists to Belarus, in order to train the workforce in situ. "We enjoy close and promising co-operation," stressed Mr. Spuhler.

The Director General of the Swiss company commented that the most immediate focus is fulfilling an order for double-decker trains for Russian Aeroexpress, which he believes to be 'prestigious'. "Our company is also busy making two trains for Belarusian Railways," Mr. Spuhler notes.

After winning a tender on March 19th, 2010, Stadler Bussnang AG signed a contract to supply ten modern electric trains

to Belarusian Railways, bringing new standards of passenger service. All have now been delivered to Belarus and are in use on urban and regional lines.

Stadler Rail AG is currently implementing an investment project to manufacture railway and urban passenger electric transport, phase by phase, by building and commissioning a factory, alongside engineering and transport infrastructure. The joint venture — Electric Transport JSC — was registered in Belarus in January 2012 and renamed as Stadler Minsk JSC in November 2013. Apart from building manufacturing capacity, the company is busy taking foreign orders, primarily from Russian customers — such as the Moscow city government. The Aeroexpress project is to bring passenger transportation to the Moscow airports of Sheremetyevo, Vnukovo and Domodedovo, using an elevated railroad. The new factory in Belarus is to launch production of double-deck trains for Aeroexpress with a commission for the fourth train.

Country's capital is ever expanding

By Andrey Fiodorov

Minsk's population has increased by more than 20,000 in a year

The capital now needs fewer than 80,000 people to reach a population of 2m and reach city-status. According to the data of Minsk's Statistics De-

partment, as of early 2014, 1,921,900 people live in Minsk, up by more than 20,000 compared to the beginning of the previous year.

In order to imagine the scale of growth of Minsk's population, we can make the following comparisons: It is more than the entire population of the district centre of Pruzhany



Number of Minsk residents growing

in the Brest Region (19,000 people) and Postavy in the Vitebsk Region (19,800).

Last year, 22,998 babies were

born in Minsk and 17,528 people died. Almost 40,000 people arrived in the capital for permanent residence, while around 27,000 residents left.

Not alone in the orbit

By Andrey Fiodorov

Belarus plans to expand its group of space satellites

"We build satellite communications and the broadcasting system of the Republic of Belarus, and create a corresponding operator of satellite communications. This is also our experience. We hope that this communication satellite won't be the last for us. We have plans to expand our participation in launches of communication satellites," notes Sergey Gurulev, the Chairman of the State Military Industrial Committee of Belarus, adding that Belarus also plans to expand its collection of space satellites. He reminded that recently the Belarusian Earth remote sensing satellite has been launched. "We have a range of developments with our Russian colleagues aiming to expand this group of sensing," added Mr. Gurulev.

It's known that the project of creating the national system of satellite communications and broadcasting has been realised in partnership with the Chinese. Last year, the creation of the communication satellite was launched, as well as of the ground control complex. The supply of equipment for the satellite ground application was also started. The Belintersat-1 satellite is to be launched in the second half of 2015.

The tender for the creation of the communication satellite was won by the Chinese Great Wall Company, which now acts as a contractor. According to the Presidential Decree, the customer of the project is the High-Precision Electro-mechanics Plant which is a part of the State Military Industrial Committee.