

Any future needs to learn from the past

Belarus and UNESCO will continue active co-operation in the field of culture, science and education

By Victor Mishin

At a meeting with UNESCO Director General, Irina Bokova, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, expressed the opinion that attention on the preservation of objects of cultural heritage promotes the strengthening of statehood. The Head of state noted the importance of this visit to Minsk which coincides with the 60th anniversary of Belarus' membership of UNESCO.

The President highly estimated the role of the organisation in the modern world. "The work of UNESCO is very symbolic and important," he said. Alexander Lukashenko paid attention to one of main aims of the organisation — the co-operation of states with the aim of safety through science, education and culture. "We are pleased that UNESCO is engaged in such problems," the Head of state declared.

Belarus has much to say in connection with its 60th anniversary of membership in UNESCO, especially in the fields of education and science. Alexander Lukashenko stated that five percent of



Irina Bokova

the country's GDP is spent on education. The President paid attention to the importance of the preservation of objects of cultural heritage. "For us it is very important to find things from our past that connect us with the present. We do not want to forget about our origins; therefore we pay great attention to these objects. All the more if they help to promote the strengthening of our statehood and remind us that Belarus is an ancient land, that different states existed here and that the land experienced different destinies. Today we

have Belarus, which is independent state with roots going far back to the past," Mr. Lukashenko said.

The President thanked the Director General of UNESCO for her visit and noted that heads of the organisation repeatedly visited Belarus. "It would be unfair if you had not come to us, being the Director General," Mr. Lukashenko noted. "You can always count on us in the organisation. We will support your initiatives, because they are very necessary and favourable not only for us, but also for all humankind."

In her turn, Ms. Bokova assured that UNESCO will further co-operate with Belarus on a full range of directions and will continue work on the preservation of Belarusian cultural heritage. The Director General believes that UNESCO represents a wide platform for international co-operation in the fields of cultural heritage, development of science and education. She focused attention on the importance of joint work. "It is important for us to continue the work which the organisation began almost 70 years ago," the



Director General said. "And we will work together on the preservation of Belarusian heritage."

Ms. Bokova also noted that Belarus has a lot to show to the world. She shared with the President her impressions of visiting BSU where she read a lecture. The Head of UNESCO was impressed by this meeting and paid attention to the great interest of students in the work of UNESCO. "They know about UNESCO, they are interested in preservation of material and non-material heritage and asked how many monuments of Belarusian cultural heritage and Belarusian traditions we can add to the World Heritage List," Ms. Bokova said. In her opinion, if young people know their own history and believe in its identity, they will face the future more confidently and will be more mobilised to solve today's problems.

The Director General of UNESCO assured, "We will work together to develop cultural identity, to support history of your heritage and we will not simply look anywhere — we will look into the future."

Issues of competence discussed

By Vladimir Khromov

Moscow hosts the meeting of Heads of Governments of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space countries

The Presidents of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan plan to ratify an agreement about future Eurasian Economic Union in May of this year. It was already 70-80 percent complete, during their last meeting, so Mikhail Myasnikov, Dmitry Medvedev and Karim Masimov still had to discuss some points regarding the bilateral and trilateral format.

Before the beginning of the enlarged meeting, Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov spoke for almost an hour with his Russian colleague. They discussed a lot of questions of bilateral co-operation, the increase of rake off of mutual settlements in Russian Roubles, the subsidising of farming machinery producers in Russia, oil and oil products delivery, as well as the realisation of integrated industrial projects. With some satisfaction, Mikhail Myasnikov noted that commodity circulation between Belarus and Russia, that had been significantly slow at the beginning of the year, was beginning to return.

But the theme of preparation of the Eurasian Econom-

ic Union Treaty was the main focus of the meeting. "It is in the high readiness phase. But, unfortunately, there are still some open questions which fall within the competence of governments and Heads of State," said Mikhail Myasnikov. Attachments and limitations on the path of free movement of goods, services, capital and the shifting of manpower still remain uncoordinated. But, according to Dmitry Medvedev, Russia is ready to make concessions in these areas.

"We have tried to accommodate the interests of our partners — we have made advances, created uniform rules of access to markets of natural monopolies, we have agreed about the development of common indicative balances of gas and oil products and we have agreed to remove attachments on some other questions."

At the meeting of Heads of governments of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space countries, the addition of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan to the 'triad' was also discussed. These countries have implemented many things to become participants of the full integration process.

Renaissance to reinforce good traditions

New hotels will use Belarusian produce to the utmost

By Vasily Khmelevsky

Fifteen new hotels have been constructed for the Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk, and already, almost all the rooms have been booked before the important sporting event. The President opened one more four star site — Renaissance Minsk Hotel.

The concept of the hotel is interesting, with its interiors seemingly reflecting the atmosphere of the Belarusian nature. Renaissance positions itself not only as a place where one can comfortably spend time, the hotel also takes on the role of a guide, trying its best to present the country to the guests. The first visitors

will be participants of the world hockey forum.

Mr. Lukashenko familiarised himself with the hotel and accommodation facilities. During the IIHF World Championship in Minsk, the hotel will accommodate delegations of six participating states: the hockey teams of Canada, Norway, Slovakia, Denmark, the Czech Republic and Sweden.

The new hotel offers 264 comfortable rooms — from standard singles to presidential suites — alongside several conference halls, an indoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi and sauna, as well as a gym, a fitness centre, spa, bars and a restaurant.



Renaissance Minsk Hotel

All rooms have high-speed Internet and interactive television. Each hotel of the Renaissance brand boasts something reflecting the national flavour and character. In the Minsk hotel these are the motifs of Belarusian nature, including of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha.

Speaking about the quality of products, Mr. Lukashenko highly praised the Belarusian goods. He also noted that Belarusian products 'may not be wrapped as beautifully as in the West, but they boast superb quality. Something that Europe can learn from us'. In particular, this includes furniture, which

can be used to equip all hotels, the President believes.

The new hotel complex is built according to the design of Belarusian specialists using the money of Russian investors. Speaking to the hotel leadership about preparation of the hotel staff, Mr. Lukashenko noted that Belarusians need to learn from the experience of their foreign colleagues in this issue. Meanwhile, the brand of the Renaissance Minsk Hotel belongs to one of the largest and most recognisable hotel chains of the world — Marriott International — which includes around 4,000 hotels in 72 countries of the world.

Declaration of intent remains in force

By Vladimir Ivanov

The position of the Belarusian side on the necessity of the elimination of all withdrawals and restrictions for the future Eurasian Economic Union is unchangeable. The President focused attention on this issue while receiving the Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikov, with a report following the results of the Moscow meeting of the Heads of Governments of the troika.

The forthcoming meeting of Heads of State on April 29th in Minsk should become a fundamental activity that will dot the i's and cross the t's and not just bet a symbol of the next stage of Eurasian integration. According to Alexander Lukashenko, "Later there will not be enough time for the completion and actually signing of the agreement about the economic union". Regarding this, the President was interested in the position of the partners; firstly, the Russian Federation and how

they perceived the quite logical and well-founded offers from the Belarusian side?

"If we build the union and aspire to that, there will be no borders here. This means that there should be no withdrawals and restrictions on the movement of goods, labour, and capital," Alexander Lukashenko noted. "It is the main objective and we proceed from this."

The President categorically denied various insinuations on the given theme, which are periodically emerging in some mass media and in certain political circles abroad, "Of course there are a lot of speculations on this topic, as if we pursue our own aims. As if we should pursue the aims of the European Union or the USA. We completely agree with those aims which were declared, and we do not intend to recede from them. We also lose much, in comparison with Russia we are a small country. And we understand what it could cost us. But nevertheless we have decided, and we will work in this direction."