

Time only uncovers memories

Friday, May 20th, marks 40th day since explosion at Oktyabrskaya metro station

According to the Christian tradition, on the 40th day after a funeral, people pray for the dead. President Alexander Lukashenko attended the Holy Spirit Cathedral to light a candle to honour the memory of the victims of the tragedy of the evening of April 11th. The whole country remembers this bloody, terrorist act and sympathises with the relatives of those killed. Flowers continue to be laid at the metro entrance in Nezavisimosti Avenue; their number even increased on Friday. All Belarusians accepted this tragedy as their common grief.

The Belarusian President thanked Metropolitan Filaret and the whole Belarusian Orthodox Church for their help given to people during these sad and sorrowful days, serving as an example to all

confessions. "You have been with the people. Please, convey my sincere gratitude to the clergy for their colossal support given to the Belarusian people over those days," said Mr. Lukashenko.

The Head of State continued, "This horrendous event has become possible in Belarus. The reason lies in the shortcomings and vices of our society, which the Church has repeatedly highlighted. This evil doesn't originate in our land and is very difficult to counteract in this time of globalisation, but we must. We'll be doing our utmost to ensure nothing similar ever occurs in our country again. Fortunately, this isn't a systematic issue. We know that now and thank God for the fact. However, there is no room for complacency. The world is in turmoil, economically and morally, with hu-



Alexander Lukashenko visits Holy Spirit Cathedral

man dignity defied and God's Commandments violated. The world is now in turmoil, up in arms; each day, thousands of innocent people die. In this economic, political, social and military whirl, we must keep the country together. We should stay to the last ditch, firmly clenching our teeth."

The terrorist act has been disclosed, but those killed will never

return. As a result of this awful crime, 14 people died and over 200 were sent to hospital. According to the latest data, 28 patients remain. Bodies and lives are broken. This is understood by everyone and no one can set aside their feelings; donations from citizens continue to pour in. The state has much to do to help people recover from the wounds left by the terrorist act.

Communications remain priority

Belarus' President, Alexander Lukashenko, sends message to the Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union, Hamadoun Touré, noting that Belarus will participate in the forthcoming anniversary forum — ITU Telecom World 2011

The message points to the expansion of relations between Belarus and the International Telecommunication Union; these gained momentum after the *Unite the CIS Space Summit* was held in Minsk in November 2009. 'Information and communication technologies are an essential part of the innovative development of the Belarusian economy', reads the Belarusian President's message.

Established in 1865, the International Telecommunication Union is the leading UN agency for information and communication technology issues, being also a global focal point for governments and the private sector in developing networks and services. The *ITU Telecom World 2011* event is scheduled for October 2011, marking its 40th anniversary. The forum will be attended by heads of the largest corporations and state bodies, in addition to leading international experts, who will discuss paths of information-communication technology development and prospects for mutually beneficial co-operation.

Extended format for mainstream politics

Sessions of the Council of CIS Heads of Government, the EurAsEC Interstate Council and the Supreme Body of the Customs Union meet in Minsk

By Irina Yeliseeva

Each union differs in scale, integration advancement and geopolitical significance but, no doubt, is closely interrelated.

Trade needs space

The major topic on the CIS prime ministers' agenda was the discussion of a draft agreement on a free trade zone. All parties, without exclusion, see this move as an attempt to inspire new life in the CIS. As Belarus' Prime Minister Mikhail Myasnikov fairly notes, "Other integration structures originate from the Commonwealth."

A free trade zone could become a symbol of the CIS' 20th anniversary. However, a uniform decision is yet to be made. Four countries are now WTO members, while the Customs Union unites three states, which hampers consensus. Nevertheless, the Chairman of the CIS Executive Council, Sergei Lebedev, is convinced that, by October, when the heads of government meet in St. Petersburg, an agreement will be signed. "If any country refuses, it will need to agree to terms co-ordinated by the remaining sides," he stresses. Other documents have been agreed and adopted, such as a joint programme regarding nuclear power. In 2012, a Programme of Innovative Development is also to launch.

Kazakhstan's Prime Minister, Karim Massimov, has an unusual request, asking for support for the candidate proposed by his country for the post of IMF Director: the



National Library is a venue for integration decisions

chairman of its National Bank. No objections have been expressed.

Right and business

The sitting of the Eurasian Economic Community's heads of government began with a discussion on the establishment of the EurAsEC Court, which is to start work on January 1st, 2012. It is to pass legislation for the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space, while examining inter-state disputes and settling claims from economic entities. The need for such a structure has long been apparent and the Customs Union's creation has made it even more so. Moreover, such a court is needed not only for participating members but for third countries trading within their territory. Rus-

sian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin stressed, "The EurAsEC Court aims to strengthen the efficiency and reliability of our community's structures, while enhancing trust and interest towards them from economic operators." Initially, it was planned that the EurAsEC Court would be headquartered in Minsk.

Later, an extended session was held, where the prime ministers listened to a report by Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Alexei Kudrin. Using figures, he illustrated that, during the crisis, EurAsEC member states' co-operation played a significant role in stabilising our national economies. An anti-crisis plan was adopted and a corresponding fund was created. At the forthcoming sitting, on June

4th in Kiev, the finance ministers will study applications sent to this structure by Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Speaking to journalists, Mr. Myasnikov explained, "All conditions have been co-ordinated, with sums checked and approaches defined. With Russia, we've agreed on a \$3bn allocation from the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund. Probably, \$3.5bn will be possible — over a three year period." He also noted that the agreement has been fixed in a 'matrix' which defines how Belarus should change its economy to efficiently use the loan.

In the near future, EurAsEC member states plan to organise a direct quotation for their national currencies on the Moscow Interbank Currency Exchange, following increased demand for Russian Roubles. So far, the programme for a common market for grain, meat and milk is yet to be realised. Nevertheless, a future Belarusian-Russian company (producing and processing milk) is planned, as Belarusian Agriculture and Food Minister Mikhail Rusy tells us. A corresponding order was placed at the Union State Council of Ministers' sitting in March. An international company is to process at least 1m tonnes of milk, integrating raw materials and sales into its assets. The EurAsEC prime ministers plan to next meet in autumn, with the venue and date to be decided.

Force of attraction

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has proposed that

the next session begins by discussing issues relating to the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space. Through all other topics tackled at previous meetings, the theme of co-operation within this integration union has remained at the core. Kyrgyzstan has defined its priorities, voicing its desire to join; Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan have agreed to hold consultations. Signals have also been sent from Tajikistan. It seems logical. With a population of 170m and \$2 trillion of aggregate capital, the Customs Union is certainly attractive.

To ensure the project is attractive for others, concrete results are needed. Belarus has already ratified all documents on the Single Economic Space, while Russia and Kazakhstan are close to completing this process. On July 1st, all forms of control — including sanitary and information — are to be moved to the external borders.

Despite the Single Economic Space being not yet operational, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan have agreed to complete all details regarding the higher integration union — the Eurasian Economic Union — by January 1st, 2013. Mr. Putin explained shortly, "The formation of this union will ensure mutually beneficial co-operation with other countries, alongside international and regional economic associations — including the European Union."

The configuration of this project is yet to be finally settled, but is not far off.