

# Mutual interests help reduce

By Igor Slavinsky

The President of Belarus has met Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar — an Arab state situated on the bank of the Persian (or Arabian, as it's called locally) Gulf. Afterwards, in Doha, a package of agreements was signed between our governments and companies, with talks

ers. Belarus is keen to raise its co-operation with Qatar into a strategic partnership, making the most of every opportunity.

Four thousand kilometres divide Minsk and Doha but no time difference is observed, as our two states share a single time zone. This is naturally an advantage but is not the major reason for our states enjoy-

much impressed with the changes which are evident. The Emir of Qatar — whom the President called his great personal friend — visited Minsk two years ago. As any Arabist can confirm, rare foreign voyages by Persian monarchs testify to the greatest favour and interest.

In fact, Belarus is the only state in the CIS and Eastern Europe from where

for Qatari citizens. This sets an example for co-operation with other countries regarding this delicate issue...

Since 2009, Belarus has been visited by numerous governmental and business delegations from Qatar, who have toured our oil refineries and potash facilities, construction sites in Minsk and others which seem attractive from the point of

ly, gas, ensuring its financial stability. Its money is now being invested all over the globe.

The Qatar Investment Authority is estimated to hold in excess of \$60bn of assets, owning a part of shares of the London Stock Exchange. It also owns part of Volkswagen, Paris Saint-Germain football club, the most famous London de-

position is grounded in its energy resources. This small state is ranked third globally for volumes of natural gas. Having learnt how to liquefy it and ship by tanker, Qatar is proving a worthy rival to Gazprom and other similar corporations. Qatar is now building terminals to liquefy gas, along the whole perimeter of the European Union. It's a sphere of great interest to Belarus, where energy independence is vital.

Belarus-Qatar direct trade has never been a priority and is unlikely to become so, since the Qatari market is modest in size and is focused on the UK (from which it gained independence only 40 years ago) and the USA (with whom it enjoys close relations). Our prospects rely on investment co-operation.

Several major projects are being negotiated between Belarus and Qatar, including the production of complex fertilisers in Qatar (worth \$1.7bn). The construction of a hotel-sports complex in Minsk for the 2014 IIHF World Championship (worth approximately \$100m) is also on the agenda. Qatar is a true pundit in this field. It may look like an endless desert from a bird's eye view, but it will be hosting the 2022 Football World Cup. Fans even joke that local stadiums will be equipped with air conditioning. Belarus plans to attract investments from Qatari companies into the mining of mineral resources, property and tourism. Among other documents signed during Mr. Lukashenko's visit was an intergovernmental memorandum on mutual understanding in the field of prospecting, mining and processing of mineral resources.

The President's second



Qatar's capital of Doha vividly demonstrates rapid state development

conducted in a warm and friendly atmosphere — although the temperature outside was above 45 degrees Celsius. Our two states share interests in the fields of petro-chemistry, gas industry, potash fertiliser production, investments into property and military-technical collaboration — among oth-

ing such active and fruitful business links. Belarus boasts good relations with all states in the Persian Gulf but Qatar stands out against this generally positive background.

This was Mr. Lukashenko's second trip to Qatar, after a ten year break, and he admitted that he was

citizens can fly to Doha directly by Qatar Airways, obtaining visas at the airport. Similar privileges are only granted to the citizens of the USA, Western Europe, Japan and Australia. In turn, Minsk has also demonstrated flexibility, backtracking from its principle of diplomatic reciprocity to lift visas

view of international business.

When the world's financial-economic crisis broke, a lack of capital was registered. However, this did not affect wealthy Qatar. This small state (just 11,500 square kilometres, with a 1.5m population) has great deposits of oil and, especial-

partment store — Harrods, and numerous property objects in the UK (worth hundreds of millions of Dollars). Specialists are convinced that investments will continue growing, respectively to Qatar's profits. Moreover, the state enjoys the highest GDP per capita worldwide.

Of course, Qatar's special

## Books tell us about neighbours

Collection of National Library of Ukraine expanded with best editions by Belarusian authors

Alexey Onishchenko, Director General of the National Library of Ukraine, has been presented with a certificate for the 130 best books of Belarus by Yelena Pavlova, the Head of the Belarusian Information Ministry's Publishing and Book Trading Department (who also headed the Belarusian delegation), during the 7th Kiev International Book Fair.

The set, compiled by the Information Ministry of Belarus, contains popular literary editions, encyclopaedias, reference books and photo albums, as well as editions which have been

awarded at prestigious national contests.

The Kiev International Book Fair, dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, was hosted by the Ukrainian House National Centre for Business and Cultural Co-operation. The event has brought together over 100 participants from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Bulgaria, Iran and Azerbaijan. The Belarusian stand hosted such publishing houses as Vysheishaya Shkola and Mastatskaya Litaratura, as well as Belkniga JSC, Krasnaya Zvezda and Belsoyuzpechat.



Belarusian books enjoy popularity in Kiev

## Bilateral relations discussed

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko speaks with President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez by telephone

Alexander Lukashenko asked about the Venezuelan President's state of health and Mr. Chavez told him about his treatment and rehabilitation. Belarus' Head of State wished his colleague and friend a speedy recovery.

The presidents discussed the development of bilateral relations in detail and agreed that a Belarusian delegation should pay a business visit to Venezuela. They also agreed to define the terms of Mr. Lukashenko's visit to Venezuela in the near future.