



President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko:

# 'I believe politics should be sincere'

"I see today's talk as absolutely sincere and all-embracing — both from the point of view of its themes and the geography of questions," Alexander Lukashenko asserted at his latest press conference. The President's meeting with the media took place at the National Library, on New Year's Eve

Alexander Lukashenko radically disagrees with the idea that 'politics is a dirty business.' "I believe that politics should be sincere and fair," he stressed. His words certainly inspired trust among about 250 journalists. These included reporters from central and regional, state-run and private media, all of whom had the opportunity to address the Belarusian President directly. Some were present at the hall, while others from regional studios used a live TV bridge.

The President was asked around four dozen questions and even more could have been asked if Mr. Lukashenko hadn't expressed his views on

vinced that language related issues have been solved, via the referendum. "If you wish to speak Belarusian, please do. No one will stop you. If you want to speak Russian then feel free," he said, briefly explaining the core of the problem. "Language is a sphere which cannot be controlled — by dictatorship or violence." His words can be illustrated by two examples. The President said that, every year, the number of students successfully passing exams in Belarusian grows, which is a good trend. He noted that his youngest son is slowly absorbing the language via Belarusian songs, adding, "Let's put

the population. "If you are ready for avalanche privatisation, then, for God's sake, we'll sell all state property in half a year," Mr. Lukashenko stressed. "However, people won't approve. If the public were to be told the true nature of privatisation — its good and bad points — I'm convinced that only about 10 percent would say we need it."

#### ON THE CUSTOMS UNION

"We'll lose nothing but could gain much," Mr. Lukashenko explained. However, he noted that it's naïve to believe that the Customs Union will automatically lift all problems between mem-

#### CLARIFICATION ON SALARIES OF \$500

Speaking of the feasibility of such plans, the President stressed, "We have planned not just for words — to accompany the election campaign. Five years ago, we promised to raise salaries to this sum." Mr. Lukashenko notes that Belarus has begun demonstrating economic progress, enabling officials to speak of raising salaries.

#### ON DIALOGUE WITH THE WEST

"Believe me, there is nothing I haven't been asked about in public. We are cutting a window to Europe — not to enable me to go to Austria to ski, as some people have written. We are cutting this window because Europe accounts for 44 percent of our exports (30 percent are sold to Russia). The President believes that, under such conditions, it is ridiculous to say that he intends 'to deceive Eu-

they are waiting for the presidential elections. They want to keep me dangling for some time. We'll find other channels of conducting dialogue with you."

#### ON THE THREAT TO SOVEREIGNTY REGARDING CLOSER INTEGRATION WITH RUSSIA

According to Mr. Lukashenko, 'we are too focused on this issue.' "The world stopped thinking like that a long time ago, yet we still cling to the icon of sovereignty," he remarked, adding, "Sovereignty is power over a territory. What power are we losing? Rather, we see profit and want to give it to our people..."

Within the Customs Union, a supranational organ is to decide by majority vote. This could contradict our interests, so more than 600 sensitive positions have been outlined — whereby decisions cannot be made without Bela-

we won't prohibit anything. There will be no bans — only responsibility. We'll make it so that lies and truths are made known. Those who break the law will bear responsibility."

#### ON LESSONS LEARNT IN 2009

The President believes that the main lesson learnt from foreign policy is that, having announced its multi-vector policy, Belarus 'has relied too much on its Eastern wing.' "We've forgotten that we are in the centre of Europe and should build relations with all neighbours — not only with brotherly Russia but also with the European Union," he stressed. "This is a lesson learnt. In 2009, we worked much towards the West — to level out the situation."

According to Mr. Lukashenko, the major economic lesson is that modernisation should have been conducted more quickly. "This would



some basic topics before the interviews began. In his forecast for the near future, the President emphasised the urgent need to realise all aspects scheduled for the five year plan. "We must overcome the negative consequences of the financial-economic crisis — which burst onto our planet — in the shortest possible time. We should restore the pre-crisis pace of economic growth and, naturally, ensure that people's standard of living improves," he stressed.

Here is a summary of the President's talk with journalists.

#### ON NATIONAL LANGUAGE

The President is con-

aside this very delicate and nagging theme. Thank God, we haven't committed follies in this area."

#### ON REFORMS

According to the President, their pace depends on the readiness and wishes of

ber states. "There are many problems. Russia doesn't want to lose its hold on the supply of natural gas, oil and oil products. However, no other situation seems possible. We'll need to spill much blood — our own and Russia's — before we agree..."

Europe. "I tell Europeans openly: let me know if you intend to continue the present policy of playing cat and mouse with us. Sanctions seem to remain, despite having been abolished for a year. How should I react?" the President asked logically. He answered, "I understand that

rus' consent.

#### ON CONTROLLING THE INTERNET

"Access to the Internet will not be restricted in Belarus but regulations will be toughened," Mr. Lukashenko said. "We must and will respond to what's happening. However,

have made it possible to overcome the crisis more easily," he supposed.

"The main lesson we've learnt is that we have one land — one country where we and our children live," the President asserted, summing up his views.



President of Belarus' press conference at end of last year proves bright event

# Spirituality and challenges of modern civilisation

"Adherence to the traditions and morality helps Belarus overcome economic difficulties," Alexander Lukashenko said at the ceremony of awarding the Spiritual Revival Awards and Special Prizes to the cultural and arts figures on January 8th

The awarding ceremony is traditionally held on Christmas days. According to the President, this is the time for joy and congratulations as well as deep meditation.

Mr. Lukashenko is confident that the economic crisis is a logical consequence of the spiritual crisis. "Envy, fraud and theft, speculations on the financial markets and corruption have been accumulating for a long time and have finally covered

the whole world. The spiritual crisis is much more dangerous than any economic downturns. Treason, meanness and lies undermine physical and mental health of a person and nations on general," he said.

"Our country is often seen as being left in the past with its moral principles. Maybe it is true. But I believe it is our great achievement. We should be proud of the fact that such notions as morals and spirituality are still sa-

cred for us, we bring up our children and build up a state ideology on these principles," the President said.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, the course of events showed that it was much easier to cope with the economic problems for the countries which pay great attention to independence and spirituality.

The awards went to individuals and teams of professionals in recognition of their active work in the hu-

manitarian sphere which contributed to the preservation and promotion of Belarusian cultural heritage, cultivation of the love for Motherland in young Belarusians, promoting spiritual values and cultural and moral traditions, altruism, charity and mercy.

The awards were given to Archbishop Aristarchus of Gomel and Zhlobin for his great personal contribution to the revival and preservation of spiritual, historical and cultural heritage of the Belarusian people; to the authors and crew of the TV news service of the National State TV and

Radio Company of Belarus for creating the documentary series *The Belarusian Land*; to the staff of the Hospice Palliative Treatment Hospital for helping severely ill people; to the staff of the Publishing House of the Belarusian Exarchate for publishing a facsimile edition of the Gospel of Slutsk; to Vladimir Katsuro, athletics coach at the Gomel sports school Leader for his achievements in social rehabilitation of physically disabled people.

Mr. Lukashenko wished all prizeholders further professional growth and perfection.