

Dmitry Medvedev's online Q&A session in Shanghai

The Prime Minister answered questions online at the Shanghai Media Group headquarters.

Dmitry Medvedev participated in an online conference with Chinese internet users at the headquarters of the Shanghai Media Group.

Excerpts from the transcript:

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Yuan Ming (*via interpreter*): This morning, the first China International Import Expo opened in Shanghai. Russia is taking part in the exhibition as one of 12 honoured guests. The Prime Minister of the Russian Federation arrived in Shanghai as the head of the Russian delegation to attend the opening ceremony. Today we are pleased to welcome the Prime Minister at the Shanghai Media Centre. Thank you for coming here to answer questions from internet users.

Welcome!

Dmitry Medvedev: Ni hao! Hello!

Question (*via interpreter*): Mr Prime Minister, in 2010, you visited World Expo in Shanghai. And now, eight years later, you came to Shanghai again. I would like to ask you what Russian-made innovations have the Russian Government and companies brought to the import expo?

Dmitry Medvedev: First of all, I would like to say that the idea of this exhibition is very appropriate and interesting. There are not so many exhibitions of this kind in the world, focused on imports. Moreover, in this case, it is a large full-fledged exhibition attended by companies from different countries. The opening ceremony today was attended by heads of state and government. It was a big-time event with President Xi Jinping opening the expo and other speakers following.

We mentioned that the world now pays a lot of attention to exports, but this is the first expo to be entirely devoted to imports – at least on such a system-wide basis. We are happy to participate. I wanted to thank our Chinese friends once again for inviting us as a partner country.

Russian companies from some 50 percent of the country's regions have come to this exhibition – large groups representing regional businesses with their products, ideas and proposals.

I explored country pavilions together with my colleagues, and after that we

toured the Russian part of the exhibition. It contains a large number of various goods including food, appliances and agricultural equipment, and in general a lot of things that may be of interest to consumers in China and, probably, in other countries.

The venue is good. And the fact that the exhibition is going to be an annual event and business representatives will meet here every year is also very, very good. So I would like to congratulate our Chinese friends on this very important event.

Question (*via interpreter*): You have said that in the future non-commodity/non-energy exports from Russia should grow to \$250 billion. What new growth points in the economy, trade and cooperation between Russia and China do you think this import exhibition can bring?

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Dmitry Medvedev: I would say this is the track that our cooperation should take. We have learned to cooperate in the energy sector – our Chinese partners are buying both gas and oil from the Russian Federation. But these are the traditional areas of cooperation, important as they are. By the way, very soon a large energy forum between our countries will take place in Beijing. As for this exhibition, it is a completely different matter. This is about non-commodity and non-energy cooperation, involving the industries that are very important for our country – agriculture, food, high technology, various technological services, and digital economy. These industries will determine the level of development of our countries in the 21st century. We very much hope that due to this exhibition and our extensive economic ties with China, the proportion of such non-commodity exports in our trade turnover will grow. This will benefit both our economies, giving them additional development drivers, and the companies involved.

Our country is determined to change the structure of trade. Russia is a large country and a major supplier of energy resources and other commodities. But we realise that future belongs to different industries, such as high technology and modern digital solutions. So we are trying to restructure our exports. At the moment, more than 50 percent of the Russian budget revenues are not from oil and gas, not from the supply of electricity or other commodities, but from other sectors. I am sure that our cooperation in this area will help us achieve the goal.

Question (*via interpreter*): You noted this morning that a representative office of the Russian Export Centre is going to open in Shanghai with the support of Vnesheconombank. This is very interesting news for Shanghai. You have also repeatedly mentioned that building a digital economy is a state goal in Russia. What areas for cooperation between our countries do you see in the digital economy?

Dmitry Medvedev: First, about the Russian Export Centre. Given the scale of cooperation between Russia and China, it is absolutely obvious that this

centre should be represented in China. So a representative office is to be established in Shanghai. This agency's job is to support Russian companies' export activities, to secure them reasonable terms for entering foreign markets, including such a large market as China. Therefore, we decided to set up a division of the Russian Export Centre here. I think it is very important. Today I looked around the exhibition and met Russian business leaders, and they thanked us for it, because it helps them work in the Chinese market.

As for the digital economy, it is a thing of the future. Everybody realises this; we realise this as well as our friends in China. We will make every effort to develop this kind of technology. After all, everything is going digital now. We are talking now – and the digitised signal goes up to the satellites; this is how they see us on TV and watch online. Without digital technology, no one would have heard or seen anything. Digital technology is also becoming a part of management – both public administration and commercial management. Digital technology is also becoming part of everyday life.

Services where people get direct answers from government agencies are already common in our country. They do not have to go anywhere; all they do is sit at their computers, open their personal accounts, fill in the forms they need and receive answers. Digital technology powers heaps of very convenient everyday things.

Finally, digital technology will contribute to the creation of what we call artificial intelligence, and artificial intelligence, quite understandably, will determine the development of countries in the current century.

In all these areas, we are ready to work together with our friends from China. Moreover, this area is very competitive. In some cases, we are being deliberately blocked, shut out of certain services or programmes because we are allegedly violating someone's rights. This might even be true in some cases, and we need to address these incidents. But in any case, unfair competition attempts are frequent enough in this area. And in this sense, it is very important that we act together combining our efforts, including, by the way, in decision-making on future trade relations, international trade relations, the World Trade Organisation. President Xi Jinping mentioned this in his address today, and I touched upon some of these issues as well.

More to be posted soon...