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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Russia has promise and is resolving its problems

I RARELY find it necessary to comment on Russia-related articles, but this time it is different. The article "Russia's Pseudo Modernity" (BT, Sept 18) by Jason Bush, is in my view, clearly biased and hostile.

It drew my attention as its appearance coincided with three major events in Russia-Singapore bilateral relations.

Firstly, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's visit to Russia as a member of the Governor's Board of the Skolkovo Moscow School of Management.

Secondly, the inaugural meeting of the Russia-Singapore High-Level Intergovernmental Commission, co-chaired by Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Sergey Sobyenin, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, to be held on Sept 27-28.

Finally, the Fifth Russia-Singapore Business Forum to be held on Sept 26-29.

These events put Singapore in the spotlight of the Russian media attention and, let me assure you, the tone of the comments is somewhat different from the said article.

Moreover, the substance of these events, somehow, does not quite match the many critical and alarmist views of the author. It proves that the Russian economy (as well as other BRIC members) is widely perceived (both, globally and at regional level) as one of the booming markets and promising investment destinations, especially, in times of great uncertainty and turbulence in the traditional western markets.

I do acknowledge that a journalist's bread is hard to win, and sometimes one has to provide a sharp, eye-catching opinion, whether it is justified and valid or not.

The author, when complaining about the slow pace of the Russian GDP growth, corruption, bureaucracy, failure to innovate as well as other things, argues that more progress towards a more democratic society is needed.

We know the problems we are facing. And we are not afraid to acknowledge them and act upon them. After all, we are only an emerging market, as western economists classify, and we are still in the transition process from the planned to the market economy.

The progress, probably, could have been faster, if we did not have to overcome the "legacy of 1990s", when much of the economic advice provided by the West led either to losses of whole sectors of industry or to unfair redistribution of property rights.

As for the political changes, I hope many would agree that, probably, Russians might know better than anyone else what suits them best.

We are all different and, yet, similar in a sense – we all long for stability and prosperity. Let's just be pragmatic and see what good we can achieve together if we treat each other with respect and dignity.

A Rozhkov
Ambassador of the Russian Federation