

Private business activity aspires to common benefit

Alexander Lukashenko visits two companies founded using foreign capital — a plant manufacturing globally known Ceresit construction materials and another producing parquet flooring — to discuss business conditions with their heads

By Kirill Slavinsky

In two decades of Belarus' independence, serious national business has been established in the country. The advantages of private ownership are evident, with the state being interested in further strengthening and developing this sector. Mr. Lukashenko is orienting local authorities towards attracting investments and establishing new production facilities. His recent working trip demonstrates the importance of this move for the country.

Henkel transnational corporation has gained a strong foothold on the Belarusian construction market, starting operations in the mid-2000s, with Henkel Bautechnik launched near Minsk to produce building glue and primer. General Director Sergey Novitsky admits that they virtually 'had to lead the foreign investor by the hand' but practice shows that no one has suffered as a result of this co-operation.

The market is receiving good quality domestic production, at 'value for money' prices, with local raw materials primarily used: Belarusian sand, cement, lime and plaster. These allow prices to be kept 15-20 percent lower (in comparison to foreign analogues).



Alexander Lukashenko pleased with use of Belarusian timber at Coswick Hardwood Flooring Factory

"The country and the economy face the task of modernising industrial facilities to use domestic raw materials," reminded Mr. Lukashenko. The second facility visited by the President was Coswick Hardwood Flooring Factory. It uses Belarusian oak and ash to produce elite parquet, following Canadian technologies. Most of its goods are exported, with no problems arising regarding currency.

The President believes that capital could work harder in the country. The positive examples of these two companies show that business can prosper. In recent years, a range of legislation has been passed to support entrepreneurship. After talking to the heads of the plants, Mr. Lukashenko noted that more freedom should be granted to company heads in their management of staff. "I'm very seri-

ously pondering how best to modernise the Council for Entrepreneurship," noted Mr. Lukashenko, adding, "I had hopes that businessmen would directly address me with proposals, including those dealing with the improvement of legislation and the tax sphere. However, nothing of the kind has happened. This year, we need to consider how best to add momentum to this sphere, to gain feedback from the

entrepreneurial community. Businessmen should voice their own views on issues affecting their development, giving us alternatives to the official view."

State and private business are partners. When Mr. Novitsky was asked: 'What do you expect from the near future?' he immediately replied, "We expect the overall development of our country. If successful, it will bring prosperity to us also."

Bilateral partnership of strategic character

Belarus and China activate bilateral co-operation in various spheres

The Head of the Belarus President Administration, Vladimir Makei, and the Secretary of the Party Committee of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous District of China, Hu Chunhua, recently met in Minsk, noting the strategic character of Belarusian-Chinese partnership.

Mr. Makei stressed with satisfaction that the views of our two countries coincide on virtually all international issues. In this respect, Belarus and China intend to continue co-ordinating their efforts, providing support to each other within the international arena.

An agreement has been reached to step up co-operation between the Belarus President Administration and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Direct co-operation between regions, companies and other state agencies of Belarus and China is planned.

Understanding has been achieved regarding the need to continue increasing the investment component in bilateral co-operation. In particular, there are considerable reserves for intensifying co-operation in the sphere of cutting-edge technologies, including joint space exploration and the creation of modern industrial parks.

Vatican hopes to spiritualise Internet



Meaningful visit by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli (centre)

Chairman of Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, tells Belarusian media in Minsk that IT brings enhanced journalist responsibility

According to Mr. Celli, modern information technologies have changed our lives, expanding our educational and communication opportunities and affecting the unity of the human family. "Having access to such technology, we must be responsible, while remain-

ing humane," he stresses, noting that the Vatican cannot regulate the Internet but strives to enhance its spiritual values. The Archbishop believes that the Internet opens up huge possibilities but it is vital that this virtual space embraces more human values. "This is the challenge that confronts us," he says.

The Chairman of the Pontifical Council asserts that new technologies pose a difficult choice for the church, as they do give people new opportunities, yet affect interpersonal communication. "I believe

that, having such opportunities, we must treat them with great responsibility. We must remain humane, especially as we do more than share information. We give a piece of ourselves," he notes.

The Archbishop is also concerned about the digital divide — a pressing problem for many countries. It divides people into those who use information technology and those who have never used even a phone. Nations should try to ensure everyone has access to modern technologies.

Participating in the Mass Media Ethics conference, speaking about press freedom and journalist responsibility, Mr. Celli identified key principles: the search for truth, freedom, justice and love. He believes that journalists should always seek out the truth, as we are created with this desire. He added that it is his first visit to Belarus. "I want to take this opportunity to convey greetings to all citizens of the country," he said. During his stay in Minsk, he met the Belarusian Information Minister, Alexander Proleskovsky, and top Belarusian clergy. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications oversees the spread of Christian belief via the media, while monitoring the ethics of the Internet.

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