

Promising plans lie ahead

Belarus' Trade Ministry and Vietnam's HAPACO to set up Belarusian-Vietnamese trading house



Belarusian tractors occupy central place in national exposition at international trade fair in Ho Chi Minh

The relevant protocol of intent has been signed at the International Vietnam Expo 2012 Trade Fair in Hanoi. Belarus' stand occupied

190sq.m, featuring exports from 50 enterprises within the Industry Ministry, the Agriculture and Food Ministry, the Education Min-

istry, the State Committee for Science and Technology and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, as well as Belneftkhim and

Belgospishcheprom concerns.

The Belarusian delegation held negotiations with the People's Commit-

tee of Hanoi, the Industry and Trade Ministry, and the corporations of Hapro and HAPACO. Trade and economic co-operation be-

tween our countries was discussed and mutual interest in raising trade turnover was voiced — including the establishment of a joint trading house.

An agreement was finally reached to increase sales of Belarusian produce to the Vietnamese market, with local companies interested in direct supplies. In addition, Vietnam has suggested setting up joint ventures in Belarus to pack rice, coffee and other products, for onward sale within the Single Economic Space.

Vietnam is a traditional trading partner for Belarus in Southeast Asia and, over the last few years, our bilateral trade has increased considerably: exceeding \$200m in 2011. The major imports from Vietnam are communication devices, office equipment, seafood, rice, fruits, tea and coffee. In turn, Belarus exports potash fertilisers, truck assembly sets, tractors and rock haulers.

Active inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary dialogue is being conducted, contributing to the expansion of legislation for Belarusian-Vietnamese co-operation. Moreover, our two states have signed over 60 inter-governmental agreements.

Truly impressive growth in investments is vividly seen

Belarus-Lithuania economic forums inspire bilateral development

By Yelena Yurkova

The first international Belarusian-Lithuanian forum took place in Klaipeda in 2005, while the second was held in Soligorsk — launching new transit opportunities for Belarusian cargo. “Belkali chose Klaipeda port in Lithuania as its main partner for transshipment of potash fertilisers to the West. We began by shipping a modest 250,000-500,000 tonnes of fertilisers but, by last year, this stood at over 6.5m tonnes,” stresses the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Lithuania, H.E. Mr. Vladimir Drazhin.

Investment growth is impressive. “Over a single decade, from 2001 to 2010, Lithuania invested \$150m in Belarus. Last year alone, this sum totalled \$111m,” he explains. An investment mechanism was launched after the economic forum was held in Vilnius in 2009 (attended by Belarusian President Alexan-



Lithuanian investor constructs trade and entertainment centre in Zhlobin

der Lukashenko, who believes that Lithuanian businessmen can feel confident in investing in Belarus). During a visit to Minsk by the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, in 2010, a group of Lithuanian businessmen met the Belarusian President.

According to Mr. Drazhin, Lithuanian investors working in Belarus have received guarantees for the

security of their assets. He notes, “Not a single cent has been lost, as our laws ensure the safety of capital injections in Belarus.” He views Lithuania’s Vakarų Medienos Grupe (one of the biggest timber exporters in the Baltic States) as a good example. The company is currently building a woodworking cluster in the Mogilev free economic zone. “The export poten-

tial of the company is \$150-200m a year. This project is a good example of active work and capital investment. Today, we are working with 15 Lithuanian or joint projects — worth nearly \$500m. This opens up big prospects,” Mr. Drazhin says.

In April, Grodno hosted the 8th International Belarus-Lithuania Economic Forum.

Positive assessment

Standard & Poor's International Rating Agency confirms long-term sovereign credit rating for Belarus at 'B-', with outlook improved to 'stable'

Analysts see ‘signs of stabilisation in the country’s economy and improvement of short-term financial conditions.’ Moreover, the agency has confirmed Belarus’ short-term rating at ‘C’ level. Clearly, the IMF’s optimism regarding our economic development is echoed by this new positive assessment.

S&P notes that the country’s

reserves in foreign currency have risen, with direct pressure on the Belarusian Rouble exchange rate almost absent and inflation gradually slowing. In the first three months of 2012, Belarus’ GDP rose by 3 percent, totalling Br105.6 trillion (around \$13bn). According to governmental forecasts, annual GDP growth is set to reach 5 to 5.5 percent.

In this first quarter, the manufacture of industrial goods rose by 8.3 percent to reach Br153.6 trillion in total (around \$19bn); the annual growth forecast is 6-7 percent.

Logistics in focus

Single logistical railway company of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan to be established by year's end

According to the Belarusian Minister for Transport and Communications, Ivan Shcherbo, plans are already underway to establish a single logistical railway company.

He notes that 50 sites have been chosen in Belarus for logistics centres, with 24 focusing on transport and logistics. Mr. Shcherbo believes

that ‘transport logistics is our future’, since Belarus boasts significant logistics potential, especially in the sphere of attracting cargo traffic travelling between Asian countries and Western Europe.

Contemporary logistics centres, as well as warehouses and access communications, are being established in conjunction with the Belarusian railway network. Logistics are developing in harmony with various types of transport: railway, road and water.