

# Touching a nuclear reactor? It's a piece of cake

Representatives of about eighty Russian and Belarusian enterprises take part in International Specialised *AtomExpo-Belarus-2013* Exhibition

**Yury Chernyakevich**

Everyone knows about the nuclear power plant being constructed in Ostrovets but few know how much those building it are earning: in January, the average salary was \$650-1,000 (in equivalent). Over 1,100 specialists are working at the construction site, with most hailing from Belarus, and, by the end of the year, up to 3,000 people will be employed there.

A recent press confer-

ence, held at Minsk-Arena, revealed further facts and figures about the building of the nuclear power station in Belarus, as part of the 5th International Specialised *AtomExpo-Belarus-2013* Exhibition. About 80 Belarusian and Russian enterprises and organisations took part, including the Belarusian State University, which presented a project for providing secure chemical production. Meanwhile, those from the Academy of Science presented their work on nuclear

waste storage and Atomtex (a Belarusian enterprise) showed its high-precision measuring equipment for the nuclear power industry.

An interactive three-dimensional model of the nuclear power plant being built in Ostrovets was on show at the forum, with visitors encouraged to touch the 'reactor'. A crowd soon gathered at the stand organised by the St. Petersburg Scientific Research and Design Institute AtomEnergoproekt, marveling at the model and learn-

ing about key features of the project by pushing little buttons: its security system, adaptations for the Belarusian site, and other characteristics. As soon as some people moved away, their place was swiftly taken.

This year, the prestigious international forum is hosted by Minsk. Since the event aims to show the latest technologies in the field of nuclear energy, Minsk is a logical venue. Belarusian and Russian companies attended keenly, eager to

share their expertise with delegations from around the world. Such forums often lead to future collaboration, through meeting new partners.

Russia remains a valuable partner for Belarus in every sphere and, certainly, in building the nuclear power station; preparatory work began in 2009, as Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko noted at the press conference. Meanwhile, the skill of Belarusian builders working at the Ostrovets site

has been richly praised by Russian experts. Alexander Merten, the Vice-President of Rusatom Overseas (a subsidiary of the Rosatom State Corporation) views their work as exemplary.

The nuclear power plant's construction in Belarus now has many supporters, with the number of opponents ever falling; significantly, its security and reliability have been confirmed by experts at Rosatom Corporation and by the IAEA, which visited Belarus recently.



Nuclear power plant interactive model arouses great interest at *AtomExpo-Belarus-2013* Exhibition

## Backlash to challenge of time

How can we best drive forward the Belarusian economy? Perhaps, no other economic issue has been so widely discussed of late in Belarus as that of modernisation. The state, society and private sector understand that the future of the country depends on our success in solving this task. What is meant by modernisation and how does it relate to privatisation and other processes in Belarus? What resources are required and what is the international context? Expert's opinion.

**Yury Shevtsov, the Head of the European Integration Problems Centre:**

In my opinion, modernisation is an economic transition from one mode to another. If the economy is based on agriculture, industrialisation would bring modernisation. The Belarusian economy faces the task of modernisation: transition from industrial (based on mass production assembly lines) to scientific (where assembly lines are more automated and products are more high-tech). The new High-Tech Park is an example of modernisation in the Belarusian economy.

Modernisation does not rely on a change of ownership; rather, it's about changing the technological mode. It matters not who owns enterprises. Modernisation is thought to accompany pri-

vatisation but historical experience shows that the most ground breaking technological solutions have been made under the direct patronage of the state, within major government programmes — such as building a nuclear power plant.

As part of the modernisation process, industrial development tends to go hand in hand with a developed service sector. Belarus, being a moderately developed European country, is creating a post-industrial society, focusing on technologies and services; of course, you need a well-educated workforce to achieve this. Belarusian modernisation should be accompanied by a growing service sector.

The solutions being implemented in today's Belarusian economy are compliant

with the path to modernisation, despite harsh criticism of the Government by the President recently; he is eager to see enterprise managers show more discipline and energy.

We shouldn't expect any major changes regarding modernisation and economic development, since we've inherited Soviet industry and economics. We were part of a vast Soviet complex but now rely on development by a small state. Many enterprises, and entire cities, were built in Belarus to supply the Soviet Union: a vast country. Regardless of Customs Union membership (with Russia) Belarus is a small nation, unable to quickly manage a vast array of assets created for other purposes. That Belarus has managed to keep its industry running is surprising;



High-Tech Park as example of modernisation

a unique situation in Eastern Europe. We actually lack enough resources for the huge enterprises we've inherited.

Breakthrough programmes are possible, such as at the High-Tech Park and BelAZ. A new Chinese-Belarusian industrial park is planned and who knows what else may arise through the integration process. However, we should understand that the mass creation of screwdriver plants in Russia does not lead to deeper

co-operation; rather, it rapidly creates competitors for Belarusian companies on the Russian market. Foreign companies involved in these schemes may have very different motivations: from capturing a long-term market to the simple destruction of competitors through short-term dumping. Nevertheless, we shouldn't exaggerate this danger. Belarus has learned to keep its production going in the face of fierce competition.

## Cellulose to be exported

**New factory at Svetlogorsk Pulp and Paperboard Mill**

Designs for the new factory are still undergoing modification but the Svetlogorsk site should be ready by early August, including a warehouse and railway branch line.

Chinese CAMCE Engineering Company is the general contractor for the comprehensive facilities at the Svetlogorsk enterprise, having designed and built similar plants. Two years ago, an agreement was signed for a loan between the Export-Import Bank of China, the ICBC Bank and the Belarusian Government, financing 85 percent of the cost — worth over \$650m.

The new factory will be making 400,000 tonnes of bleached sulfate at Svetlogorsk Pulp and Paperboard Mill annually, enabling it to meet the needs of all paper mills in the Republic, offering high-quality resources. This should help the industry expand, while raising the country's export potential. Total expenditure on the project is in excess of \$800m.