

Importance of specifying all criteria

President listens to report on state support of sports

By Vladimir Khromov

The Deputy Prime Minister, Anatoly Tozik, has joined the First Vice President of the National Olympic Committee, Igor Rachkovsky, the Minister of Sports and Tourism, Alexander Shamko, and the Assistant to the President for Physical Culture, Sports and Tourism, Maxim Ryzhenkov, in reporting on two draft decrees regarding state support of sports organisations, to encourage promising athletes.

Alexander Lukashenko reminded them that relevant issues have already been discussed at a large-scale meeting and instructed them to improve the draft of a new decree on the support of organisations of physical culture and sports. This aims to provide fair conditions of functioning and efficient allocation of state funds. He also asked that the way scholarships are allocated to athletes be reconsidered, noting, "It's not because we're afraid of overpaying someone or underestimating someone but I'd like to reconsider these draft decrees in terms of support and, especially, to ensure that scholarships reflect results. I have no desire to set the number of scholarships: let it be 5,000 instead of 500 or 250. However, athletes must comply with our set criteria. We must decide on our criteria, and let this govern who receives a scholarship. It's not enough just to win a medal at the Olympic Games, since we pay quite a lot for this already and offer

other opportunities. Scholarships should be for the promising athletes of tomorrow (mostly young people) who lack money in general. They should receive scholarships, but not in excess. It can be a good and useful support for their early years of development."

He continued, "As for the support of clubs, we should reconsider this once more; in these difficult times, we shouldn't be financing structures which can earn their own keep. They have initiative people who must be making money; they live well — the athletes and, especially, the club officials. Recently, I heard that Dinamo HC had failed the season completely, yet had received hundreds of thousands of dollars (officials and functionaries). They say that everything is ok so why are we providing them with state support? Yes, it is necessary to support the club, but only the athletes and the club's sporting development; we need to make a distinction."

The latest draft decrees propose a new approach, incorporating ideas from the January meeting. Innovations include motivating clubs to independently earn money for their own development. The load on the budget will be reduced, over coming years, until 2015. Meanwhile, the athletes of the future will be the main beneficiaries, rather than those who have already succeeded. Once ready, the decrees will be signed by the President of Belarus.

Ties stretch to regions

Belarus still values its direct connections with Russian regions, as noted by President Lukashenko during his recent meeting with the Governor of the Penza Region, Vasily Bochkarev. Mr. Lukashenko has suggested using Eurasian integration to develop industrial co-operation between Belarusian business entities and their partners in Russian regions.



Alexander Lukashenko meets delegation from Penza Region

By Vasily Kharitonov

Co-operation has advantages

"I'm firmly convinced that modern conditions require our partnerships to extend beyond trade and barter transactions," Mr. Lukashenko emphasised. "We should create joint ventures across the Russian regions, especially in light of our Customs Union and the Common Economic Space. Industrial co-operation is a key area of interaction."

Co-operative projects have many advantages, according to the President: promoting bilateral trade, creating employment, stimulating production of competitive technology and increasing tax revenue. Positive examples are apparent in our liaisons with the Penza Region, where an assembly plant of Belarusian tractors launched last

year. Joint production of elevator equipment is being considered and, according to Mr. Lukashenko, co-operation is afoot in the spheres of agriculture, transport and construction.

Lift in the future already launched

Mr. Bochkarev confirmed his region's interest in developing industrial co-operation with Belarus and noted his particular admiration for high quality Mogilev lifts; in the region, 80 percent of existing elevators are from Mogilev and, with grand housing construction afoot, further co-operation seems promising.

"We have much to learn from you in terms of road construction," admitted Mr. Bochkarev. "We could also launch joint furniture and garment manufacturing, pro-

moting these products not only in Russia and Belarus, but to other CIS countries and beyond."

Dreams come true

Mr. Bochkarev praised agricultural development in Belarus, both in terms of the creation of modern jobs and use of the latest equipment. "The farms we've seen have been beautiful, manned by well-trained employees and, of course, expecting a good income," he said. "We've also seen the equipment you produce, including that made jointly with Dutch companies, which is assembled and partially completed by Belarusian enterprises. I've dreamed about such a thing and you've achieved it."

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that all the proposals made by the Governor of the Penza Region are of interest to Belarus,

"We'd like, if not to restore Soviet production volumes, then to approach them. We may even recover these volumes, if Russia agrees." According to the President of Belarus, Mr. Bochkarev many times repeated Mr. Lukashenko's suggestion made to the President and Prime Minister of Russia two or three months ago, regarding joint projects in the field of light industry: to restore worsted, cloth, leather and shoe manufacture.

Fabric of success quite tangible

Mr. Lukashenko believes that our country could go further in this direction. "Let's create an appropriate holding together, buying raw materials and manufacturing products. We'll win tenders together and lift this sphere," he suggested. "We can't escape. If you accept China dressing and shoeing you, then it will be so. However, we should have our own [enterprises]. Moreover, we can do this." The President noted that Belarus will start the development of associated industries, 'beginning with fabrics and followed by agriculture.' "We'll drive forward sheep breeding in the Russian Federation. In Belarus, we've already begun," he continued. Summing up the discussion, Mr. Lukashenko noted that Belarus is ready to send experts to the Penza Region and to start supplying equipment. The President also stressed that he guarantees the fulfilment of all agreements. In turn, the Governor noted that he would monitor personally the implementation of bilateral projects. The parties have decided to create a working group to analyse all potential avenues of co-operation between Belarus and the Penza Region.

Neighbours living without need of border fences

By Sergey Gomanov

An inter-state agreement on the Belarusian-Latvian state border is signed in Vitebsk, following a meeting between the Foreign Minister of Belarus, Vladimir Makei, and that of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs

Mr. Makei explains, "The issues discussed relate to trade-economic, humanitarian and political co-operation, as well

as Belarus-EU relations. Mutually acceptable solutions have been found in all areas. We've clearly shown Belarus' position regarding collaboration with the European Union and have listened to our colleague's position. I believe that, despite all existing problems in our relationship with the EU, we're not at an impasse. We've achieved definite understanding on how best to develop our interaction in the context of our relations with the EU."

The inter-state agree-

ment completes the international legal process, formalising the borders set in 1992, regulating how the border should function. It covers the procedure for crossing by citizens, transport vehicles and aircraft, as well as movement of cargo. Moreover, it details how incidents are to be tackled.

We boast close ties and, since February 2012, have operated an agreement between Belarus and Lithuania on simplified crossing for residents of border

areas. Permission can be granted by the consulate at a cost of just 20 Euros, while pensioners, those with disabilities and children under 18 are free of charge. Last year, over 8,000 Latvians and around 500 Belarusians took advantage of the new rules. Mr. Rinkēvičs also notes, "We've charged our consulate services with simplifying border crossing even further, by eliminating some bureaucracy. I believe corresponding amendments will soon be made to the agreement."

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