

Showcase site not to leave questions

Alexander Lukashenko demands that construction of Belarusian sites in Sochi and Krasnaya Polyana accelerate, bringing everything here to absolute order as patterned

During his working trip to the Russian Federation, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, toured the ongoing construction of Belarus spa in Sochi and its recreation centre in Krasnaya Polyana. The Head of the Presidential Property Management Directorate, Victor

Sheiman, has told the Head of State that profits will be maximised at the facilities.

“There is one issue: we must finish what we’ve started, completing these construction projects. We should do whatever is needed to launch the sanatorium in Sochi,” the President

noted. “As far as Krasnaya Polyana is concerned, we have no time to waste. The task was set a long time ago; you were supposed to know what should be done to make the facility profitable. Naturally, the biggest money is to be made during the Olympic Games, which are being held there in a year’s

time,” stressed the Head of State.

Mr. Lukashenko stated that Belarusian facilities are already earning good money and that the new hotel should be no exception, being located in a perfect place, enjoying popularity. He underlined, “Half of the land the Russians gave us for

construction remains vacant so we need to decide how we’ll use it. It’s the best site in Krasnaya Polyana so we should set an example, offering facilities rivalling those in Belarus. Everything should be perfect, even if we need to lay access roads from the main highway.”

Much depends on motivation

The Government has summed up the results of 2012 and discussed priorities for this year. Undoubted achievements are stabilisation of the foreign exchange market, keeping inflation within forecast levels, a debt-neutral budget and a positive balance of foreign trade for the first time in a decade.

People’s real income has grown alongside the economy, while gold and foreign currency reserves have increased by \$180m. Nevertheless, the Government believes the results could have been better, since the country received nearly 21 trillion roubles less in added value last year than forecast. This naturally affected wages, profits and tax revenue, emphasised the Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikovich. Each invested rouble should reap two or three times more in added value. “Modernisation is impossible without investments and innovations,” he stresses.

The main priorities for modernisation in Belarus have been determined as the development of the private and private-public sector; state support for high-efficiency projects; and integration with the world’s leading companies. The Belarusian-Chinese Industrial Park provides a good example and is being provided with external engineering networks this year. The first joint projects are soon to come to fruition.

According to Mr. Myasnikovich,



Vitebsk Silk Weaving Factory is first in Belarus to master geotextile production

in the first half of the year, Belarus will be taking action to become one of the top thirty countries for ease of doing business. Another priority is construction, with a further two million square metres of housing

planned. From March, all residential buildings will be constructed using energy efficient technologies and state loans will be available to private citizens wishing to build their own homes.

Although the main goals have been agreed, dispute remains regarding tactical issues. The Government will need to reach a consensus by March 1st, ready to report to the President on its plans for the year.

Vital to observe broadcasting conditions

Information Ministry considering shift to declarative principle of registration for electronic media

During an online conference, Dmitry Shedko, Belarus’ Deputy Information Minister, has noted that the shift from a permissive to a declarative principle for setting up electronic media in Belarus would require legislation to be updated. “We can move to a declarative principle but reader’s rights to accurate content need to be clearly specified, as do the rights of broadcasters for copyright protection. This especially refers to small channels and small operators, often located in the depths of the country. Often, we see films not yet released in Europe appearing illegally on some cable-based network, ignoring the elementary requirements of our legislation,” noted the Minister. The permissive principle of electronic media registration is currently operational but Mr. Shvedko explains, “Recently we’ve received three applications for the launch of broadcasting by a Russian TV channel. However, it has repeatedly failed to offer a contract stating its ownership of copyright on the territory of Belarus. They’ve used various diversions to avoid showing this document. Of course, we can’t allow them to broadcast here.”

Every dispute to be solved through calm dialogue



Belarus’ Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei, takes part in 2nd round of informal ministerial Eastern Partnership dialogues, hosted by Tbilisi from February 12th-13th

“At the plenary session, the head of the Belarusian delegation spoke

of EaP principles, which should take into account the interests of all member states, applying ideas to real projects. Belarus has made a number of proposals regarding preparations for the Vilnius Summit, including listing the most strategic projects and ways of strengthening the EaP business dimension,” notes the Foreign Ministry.

Mr. Makei met the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, thanking him for Georgia’s support of Belarus within the international arena, including within the Eastern Partnership. They discussed a wide range

of issues pertaining to Belarusian-Georgian bilateral co-operation.

Mr. Makei also met the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, and the Deputy Secretary General for the European External Action Service, Helga Schmid. He spoke in favour of regulating all Belarusian-European disputes via calm dialogue, without dictation or external pressure. He also emphasised that Belarus’ further involvement in European integration processes must meet the interests of both Belarus and the European Union.

Have something to watch

Number of Ukrainian channels increases in Belarus

In January alone, the Information Ministry awarded permission to several Ukrainian channels to broadcast across Belarusian territory. “The range of Ukrainian TV

channels is gradually rising, as they offer a great deal of Russian-language content,” notes Dmitry Shedko, Belarus’ Deputy Information Minister.

It’s unlikely that the number of Ukrainian TV channels will ever

match the number from Russia. Mr. Shedko notes that many foreign TV channels actually originate in the USA, UK, Sweden, France, or elsewhere in Western Europe but receive Russian registration, so are classed as Russian broadcasts in Belarus.