

Time for persuasion over

Another break in the schedule of wood processing enterprises' modernisation would entail serious problems for people responsible

By Victor Khmelevsky

A Presidential meeting, focusing on Bellesbumprom Concern's work, was scheduled for Vitebskdrev JSC premises. Most of the modernisation was supposed to be finished there by last December but, as of late January this year, the enterprise is still unready to accept visitors. As a result, a meeting took place in Minsk, and a line was drawn under all previous talks. From now on, all failed promises and unrealised orders of the President will be severely punished. There are legal grounds for such measures to be taken if necessary.

The wood processing industry is receiving much attention, which is well explained. So far, the issue has been discussed many times, but it can never be too many. The economic modernisation relies on this, and diversification is vital. It is necessary to increase the plant's export potential, while efficiently using our own raw materials and other resources. Such a model minimises the dependence of the economy on external factors, which creates grounds for the national security and the strengthening of the state. Accordingly, a seemingly economic project entails political aspects.

At the beginning of the meeting, the President reminded everyone that the talk was planned during the appointment of Bellesbumprom's new Chairman, Yuri Nazarov. He had to share his own view about a solution to the existing system problems of the branch, while offering ways for its further development. While addressing those present, Alexander Lukashenko asked several questions. What measures are being taken to facilitate modernisation of the branch and ensure its designed capacities? How much would



Modernisation at Mostovdrev JSC in the Grodno Region has already increased manufacturing

the depth of raw material processing increase, and would more high value products be produced? What would be the economic effect and most important results of the modernisation and would these ensure increased production volumes and enhanced quality? Are the issues of the sales market for ready products settled? Is the export radius growing and are new partners being searched for? How are the needs of the domestic and foreign markets taken into account? What is to be done to improve the operation of Belarus' own trading network and branded stores, while applying new forms of trade? What steps are being made to improve the company's financial state and their loan repayments?

The Chairman of the State Control Committee, Alexander Yakobson, informed those attended about the systematic failures in the modernisation

process and his speech echoed much contained in Mr. Nazarov's report. The latter listed measures that were vital to eradicating the evident problems, while proposing ways to optimise the delivery of raw materials to enterprises (which need floating assets). He also stressed the importance of mastering new promising markets in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Chairmen from the regional executive committees and factory directors also shared their views, while the speech of Ivatsevichdrev JSC's Director General, Cheslav Shulga, was truly impressive. In the past, he had headed Bellesbumprom Concern but was then sent to Ivatsevichi to correct the mistakes of the former heads. So far, Ivatsevichdrev is the only company of group which has fulfilled the modernisation project, albeit with a delay. The

results are already evident — profits have doubled. Moreover, despite a reduction in staff, economic efficiency has increased. With this in mind, Mr. Shulga is considering modernisation of the old facilities and the achieved results are a good impetus.

The President had no serious objections regarding Mr. Nazarov's plan, but paid attention to a key aspect, and all former heads of the Concern had similar views. Guarantees are needed to ensure the plan comes to fruition. Mr. Nazarov assured the President that intensive labour would be the best guarantee. Motivation is also vital and material benefits are evident at Ivatsevichdrev's example. Responsibility for the failure should be also made clear as well. With this in mind, the President ordered the preparation of a draft act which would specify the deadlines of all modernisation work

but that these dates should not be invented anew. Those defined last year by the regional and Governmental heads must be applied, keeping to the 'late 2014' deadline. In addition, the new document is to envisage a criminal liability for the failure to meet the plan. According to the President, this would affect anyone, including company and regional heads and the Prime Minister.

The situation at Vitebskdrev would receive its principal assessment and, addressing the Head of the Presidential Administration, Andrei Kobayev, Mr. Lukashenko ordered, "Invite the Prosecutor General and order him, as part of a criminal case, to study all related issues and calculate losses. There is no need to co-ordinate this matter with me."

Evidently, the modernisation of the wood processing group acquires tough yet necessary action.

Scholarship to help gifted persons

Alexander Lukashenko has signed a Decree 'On Granting Scholarships by the President of the Republic of Belarus to Gifted Young Scientists for 2014'

Monthly Presidential scholarships to the sum of Br3m have been assigned to 90 gifted young scientists, to 10 doctors of science aged up to 45 years, to 47 candidates of science aged up to 35 years, as well as to 33 degree-less young scientists aged up to 30 years. According to the Press-Service of the President, up-and-coming researchers have been fitted in the group of scholars; these people have got results which have substantial scientific and practical significance. A lot of representatives of engineering, natural and agrarian sciences have patents on inventions, useful models, and types of plants.

Starting point of consultation

By Ignaty Velikhov

Belarus and the European Commission start negotiations on agreements on the simplification of visa procedures and re-admission

This theme was the focus of attention during a working visit of the Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, Yelena Kupchina, to Brussels. The modalities of negotiations, which will be held in Minsk in March of this year, were co-ordinated at the meeting with the Director General for Home Affairs of the European Commission, Stefano Manservisi. During the meeting between the Deputy Foreign Minister and the European Union Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, and the European External Action Service (EEAS) Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia Regional Co-operation and OSCE countries, Gunnar Wiegand,

they discussed many prospects of Belarusian-European dialogue and practical interaction between Belarus and the European Union, including the participation of Belarus in the *Eastern Partnership* and technical co-operation.

They also reached agreements regarding the beginning of talks concerning modernisation, with a view to determining the best form of future co-operation between the government of Belarus and the European Union in this field, in accordance with paragraph 29 of the final declaration of the Vilnius summit of the *Eastern Partnership*.

Forthcoming meeting to be in Sochi

By Veniamin Mishin

After hearing a report by Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikovich, Alexander Lukashenko announced that he will meet with the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, during his visit to Sochi

Mr. Lukashenko mentioned that he had been informed about the outcome of the recent visit of the Belarusian PM to China. The Belarusian leader asked about the attitudes of the country's Chinese partners. "How are they going to promote our co-operation, and what progress can be made? I

will see the Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Sochi. He has already told me about it, therefore, I'd like to be informed about the latest developments," noted the Head of State.

Mikhail Myasnikovich provided the details of his visit to China, and focused on the fact that Belarus and China are advancing to a fundamentally new level of co-operation, from commodity and credit interaction to investment collaboration. A number of Chinese companies have plans to work in the Belarusian market. "It's very important for us, because it means the diversification of our capital investments," emphasised the PM.



View of pre-Olympic Sochi

Moreover, Xi Jinping decided that the status of the official who will co-chair the joint intergovernmental commission from the Chinese side should be as high as the Deputy Prime Minister. The President of China also pledged all possi-

ble support for joint investment projects of mutual interest. Alexander Lukashenko welcomed these decisions.

In line with the agreements, a delegation of Chinese specialists will visit Belarus in the near future. Negotiations will tackle