

# Katarina heads for Brazil

First naval shipping company receives legal address in Belarus

By Victor Mikhailov

The country has many times announced the launch of its own fleet, with obstacles then appearing to the actualisation of the intention. Of course, setting up a merchant navy is no easy task, especially for a landlocked state like Belarus. Finally, declarations have shifted to a concrete project coming together, as noted at a recent press conference. The nation's first shipping company has been established, explains the Minsk office of Zepter Group. The presence of Zepter in Belarus is a good example of business development from abroad; initially, Zepter was involved in trade exclusively but, later, expanded into additional services — such as insurance, property and Zepter Bank. Its Vice President, Vibor Mulic, tells us that his company's arrival in Belarus has been a successful choice, with conditions for investments and business proving favourable and encouraging the realisation of promising projects. This refers to the establishment of Belmorflot shipping company, with Zepter as its major investor. The corporation owns 70 percent of shares in Belarus' first shipping company (with the remaining 30 percent held by foreign investors).

The efforts demonstrated by investors to promote their project deserve respect. In



First shipping company has huge plans regarding freight of international vessels

late November 2010, Belmorflot was registered by the Minsk City Executive Committee. By mid-December, it had moored its first vessel at Lithuania's port of Klaipeda: dry-cargo ship Katarina, with a 27,000 tonne capacity (purchased from Croatian partners). Soon, a second dry-cargo ship is to arrive at Klaipeda: called Karolina. In 2011, Belmorflot is to buy two more vessels: Dina (also with a 27,000 tonne capacity); and Khana (40,000 tonnes). Each is to be moored at Klaipeda. "We're planning

a large vessel building programme, running for 7-10 years," explains the Chairman of Belmorflot's Supervisory Board, Alexander Belousov. "Belmorflot expects to increase its fleet of shipping vessels by adding a dry-cargo ship of 57,000 tonne capacity. With the assistance of Zepter Group, the vessel is being built in China."

Belmorflot's fleet is to transport loose goods: ore, fertilisers, soya and sugar. Next year, the company plans to ship over one million tonnes of cargo, but

700,000 tonnes would be a good result. In the shipping industry, unforeseeable circumstances are a matter of fact, with bad weather conditions prone to causing losses.

Potash fertilisers are to be the major cargo shipped from Klaipeda on Katarina, destined for Brazil on its first trip. The Latin American destination is to dominate Belmorflot's work. Katarina will return loaded from Brazil. The company also plans to closely liaise with Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba.

Of course, Belmorflot relies on the state placing orders for shipment of Belarusian cargo; companies worldwide work under a similar principle. However, Belmorflot must gain the status of a national shipping company... which lies ahead. It is currently purely a commercial business project, using foreign investments. Nevertheless, talks with the Belarusian Government regarding preferences are underway; if the state believes working with Belmorflot will be profitable, positive

decisions may be taken. So far, the advantage is that Belarusian specialists will work as crew members, initially, working alongside Croatian sailors.

Belarus has many specialists with sailing experience; in Soviet days, Belarusians accounted for a quarter of all sailors. They are still valued on board ships travelling under the Russian flag and under the flags of other states. No doubt, Belmorflot won't lack professionals. "We have employed highly professional freight-managers, who have the skills necessary for this responsible job, with experience of working for foreign companies," notes Belmorflot's Executive Director, Leonid Fillintsov. "With their experience and skills, we hope to ensure full freight loading of our vessels in the near future."

Belmorflot's appearance does not mean that the niche of shipping companies is filled. "Anyway, Belmorflot is a concrete reality," explains the Chief Consultant for Sea and River Fleet at Belarus' Ministry of Transport and Communications, Alexander Sokolov. "We've received investment proposals from other shipping companies, but only Belmorflot exists as yet."

There's plenty of time to see how successful this first shipping company proves to be. Its profitability will, no doubt, guide the future of Belarus' merchant navy.



Electronic train convenient for passengers

## Travelling anew

Electronic travel tickets could be in use in Minsk from next year

An automated payment system for travel should provide accurate data on passenger flow for each route while allowing a flexible tariff system. Travel costs will be determined by several criteria — such as travel duration or distance.

"Special terminals are to be installed on public transport, reading data from electronic cards, similar to those currently used on the metro, but more contemporary," explains Vladimir Lezhnyuk, the Head of Minsktrans' Department for Control and Automated Computing Systems. "Passengers won't even need to take their card out

of their pocket, since it activates within 10cm of the terminal. Boarding should be smooth, as there won't be any ticket barriers. Reading devices will be installed inside every door, allowing us to enter via any door, not only the front."

Are electronic travel tickets convenient for passengers? Of course, since you can easily see how many trips you've taken and it's certainly convenient to use the same card for travel by bus or tram (the card covers bus travel for a whole month and ten uses of the tram). These electronic tickets will become operational not from the first day of the month, but from any day on which a ticket is activated. Controllers will still make checks to deter fare evasion.

## Department stores worth visiting in search of gifts

Pre New Year atmosphere reigns in shops

By Irina Veremeeva

If you are pining for fluffy snow, cheerful frost and colourful city illuminations, you should head to a big department store, where the festive spirit is truly embraced. Catch the holiday atmosphere by choosing your fir tree, decorations and gifts in beautifully decorated surroundings.

Carnival costumes, souvenirs of 2011, fancy masks, candles and Christmas tree decorations are among the most popular sales at this time of year.

"Why is your Father Frost hanging from the ceiling?" asks an old man in the Central Department Store, pointing to a figure of Santa Klaus climbing a rope ladder with his sack of gifts. "He's going into a chimney," smiles the



Sellers ready to satisfy young buyer's wishes

seller. Statuettes of cats and rabbits — talismans of 2011 — are also on sale, with rabbits bought more often, according to shop as-

sistants. People are buying 'rabbit' costumes for children, although 'squirrels', 'little foxes' and 'musketiers' are also selling well. Classic snowflake embellished dresses remain every little girl's favourite.

Shops, and shop assistants, have transformed, with two retailers in the Central Department Store dressing their staff in the sparkling white costumes of Snow Maidens and snowflakes for these few weeks of December. "We're creating a festive mood while answering the usual questions from customers and giving advice. We also have small gifts for children," they explain.

Various promotions and sales are scheduled, in addition to fashion shows, with many shops countrywide introducing pre New Year discounts.