

Clear example of technological advantages

Belarusian Industrial Forum - recently held in Minsk - focuses on innovations

By Olga Belyavskaya

The forum has expanded greatly over its many years of existence. This year, companies from Belgium, the UK, Hungary, Germany, Spain, Italy, China, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, the USA, Ukraine, Finland, the Czech Republic and Sweden brought new technologies to Minsk. As ever, the programme was rich, featuring a popular contest of welders, a competition of energy efficient and energy saving technologies and equipment, seminars and conferences.

This year, the Exchange of Industrial Sub-Contract was held for the first time, yet was among the most topical events regarding its economic theme.

At present, only 50,000 companies out of 350,000 are included in the fullest reference book, which is compiled by businessmen themselves. It was discussed how best to conduct branch policy and how to assess the situation before entering a market if no information is available on players and volumes, as this makes it difficult to calculate economic effect and feasibility. Additionally, large enterprises are failing to find partners among small and medium sized businessmen. Import substitution could solve many problems so, with this in mind, the exchange has become an ideal venue for establishing ties and production co-operation.

Meanwhile, the Bel-

promenergo exhibition focused on the solution of the most topical problems for large industrial enterprises, looking at the spheres of energy, construction, urban accommodation and communal facilities. The country lacks its own energy sources, so innovative alternatives are sought. The World Bank is keen to promote energy efficient projects, attributing this branch to the strategic interests of its European partner-countries.

Belarus' Industry Minister, Dmitry Katerinich, noted at the forum that the industrial complex is viewing innovative manufactures as a strategic priority — its 'major guide to development'. By extending high-tech and high inten-



Belarusian Industrial Forum held under 'aegis' of innovations and investments

sive manufacture (competitive on foreign markets) the economy should achieve sustainable development and increased export potential for its machine building complex and be-

yond.

The Belarusian stands at the forum demonstrated modern vehicles and agricultural machinery, a wide range of technological equipment and energy

saving technologies. Mr. Katerinich stressed that domestic companies need modern technologies, with the forum offering the chance to view the latest foreign models.

Laying sea routes



Merchant navy's establishment is economically feasible

By Olga Belyavskaya

Belarus can attract investors from Spain and Portugal to develop its own merchant navy

"Negotiations are underway with a range of countries with access to the sea — not just

Lithuania and Latvia. We've begun negotiations with Spain and Portugal, as well as with African investors. Serious talks with Turkey also continue," notes Belarus' Minister for Transport and Communications, Ivan Shcherbo.

Last year, a navigation com-

pany, Belmorflot, was set up in Belarus. It currently transports freight using rented ships but plans to purchase its own fleet in the future. "The issue of producing such vessels in the country is high on the agenda. We can't manage without foreign investors though, as ships are very expensive; each can cost between \$25 and \$50 million, depending on tonnage," Mr. Shcherbo explains.

The establishment of this production and the Belarusian merchant navy is being guided by a decree, currently being drafted by the Ministry. "Belarus already has legislation governing the formation of its own navy," notes the official.

The Zepter Group is the major investor in the Belmorflot project, with a 70 percent stake in the company. Belmorflot's ship has made its first trip to Brazil and the Zepter Group now plans to invest \$100m in purchasing seven sea vessels within the next five years.

Goods expand market

By Mikhail Overyanov

Belarusian-Venezuelan trading house may open in Minsk

Belarusian-Venezuelan joint trading enterprise Venbelcom has boasted a permanent exhibition of goods on its premises in Caracas since late April.

"According to a previously signed agreement, a similar trad-

ing house may open in Minsk," notes the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Americo Diaz Nunez. "Probably, Venezuela is keen to see the work of the trading house in Caracas before deciding."

The Belarusian-Venezuelan trading house in Caracas was set

up to increase sales in both countries, covering new areas of collaboration, with contracts signed by state enterprises and private companies.

"Eventually, it could lead to a significant rise in bilateral trade turnover, since interaction between our two countries is mostly complementary," adds the Ambassador.

Forum pushes into action

By Nadezhda Radivonova

Lithuanian businessmen interested in agricultural projects in Minsk Region

Representatives of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee have recently taken part in the Belarusian-Lithuanian Economic Forum in Druskininkai, presenting their region's investment opportunities. Investors are being encouraged to fund local industrial and agricultural companies and tourism development. Several tourism sites are being offered in the Lake Naroch area, with hotels and recreational facilities planned.

A Lithuanian company is showing interest in building a factory to process milk whey, in the

town of Nesvizh, alongside the development of agricultural enterprises. The agricultural sphere is attracting investors, with one Russian company intending to build a dairy farm at Sakovichy JSC in the Logoisk District, to process milk.

Lithuanian businesses are already vigorous in the Minsk Region, with over 90 joint ventures and foreign-owned companies having a share of Lithuanian capital created to date. Lithuania is second only to Russia for investments into the region (192 companies use Russian money). The largest projects include the construction of a logistics centre near the town of Rakov and the creation of a factory to process sea products.

Crop to be harvested by new machinery

First batch of maize harvesters to be assembled in May at Belarusian-Chinese enterprise

At present, Belarus is actively dispatching hundreds of vehicle sets for harvesters to China. "In turn, our partners are supplying Chinese-made components. As soon as a definite stock of components has been made, we'll begin assembly of vehicles," notes Igor Korotkevich, the Head of PA Gomselmash's Sales Department.

According to the business plan



Gomselmash branded goods

of the joint venture, by the beginning of maize harvesting, around 1,000 machines should have been assembled. The harvester has been developed by Gomselmash specialists. The assembly of the new vehicles, produced in line with the requirements of the Chinese market, will be conducted at a joint company using Chinese-made engines and other components.