

Minsk *Stroyexpo* exhibition promotes latest construction industry novelties

Building spring know-how

Around 300 companies from 12 countries of the world take part in Minsk's International Specialised *Stroyexpo. Spring 2013* Exhibition

Leading enterprises from Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland and Estonia have presented their goods at the construction forum, joining major Belarusian manufacturers such as Brest's Factory of Construction Materials, Gomeloboi, Lida Lakokraska and Smorgonsilikatobeton.

During the opening ceremony, the Director of the National BelExpo Exhibition Centre, Alexey Lazuko, noted that, this year, the

number of foreign representatives from the construction industry attending the forum had almost doubled. Belarus' Deputy Construction and Architecture Minister, Dmitry Semenkevich, emphasised that *Stroyexpo* is a key event for the domestic construction industry and that interest is ever growing. He stressed, "Such exhibitions are a good venue for establishing professional relations and for signing contracts, while familiarising consumers with the latest achievements in the sphere

of construction. At present, new construction materials produced by Belarusian and joint enterprises are to the fore."

Of course, energy efficient technologies are the latest global trend, so Belarusian industry has been following this path. "Since April, residential building design in Belarus has focused on energy saving elements," Mr. Semenkevich added. "Attention is being paid towards industrial housing construction, particularly individual homes; the exhibition's demon-

stration of goods and construction methods reflects those being used in the state programme of industrial and individual housing construction."

Stroyexpo. Spring 2013 featured all elements related to construction and design, including interior finishing. On show were road and construction machinery, various equipment and, even, protective clothing for workers. The forum celebrated new trends in architecture, design and, of course, energy saving.

Trade to show better dynamics

Belarus and Serbia plan to ramp up bilateral trade to \$500m

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Stojan Jevtic, expressed regret at a recent press conference that economic contacts between our two countries still lag behind our high level of political co-operation and friendly ties. He also noted that Belarus and Serbia are gradually expanding their bilateral trade: up from \$35m in 2006, to \$170m last year. "Our two heads of state have concluded that Belarus and Serbia are not taking advantage of some co-operation opportunities," he underlined.

Mr. Jevtic emphasised that Belarus and Serbia have developed a legal framework to boost bilateral collaboration, signing a total of 22 international documents and a free trade agreement. "All conditions exist for successful economic interaction," he added, stressing that Belarus and Serbia aim to hit \$500m of trade turnover before long: an agreement was signed during the recent meeting in Minsk between our two presidents.

'Orange lightning' dives

By Yury Chernyakevich

Bank consumer loans still expensive although becoming cheaper

The refinancing rate of the National Bank has dropped by 1.5 percent since mid-March, reaching 28.5 percent per annum. The fall has led to loans becoming cheaper and, thereby, more accessible.

Belarusky Narodny Bank has reduced its rates by 10-15 percent, while 'Orange Lightning' loans have fallen by a significant 22 percent: from 77 to 55 percent per annum.

Other banks remain more cautious in reducing loan interest rates but the trend is certainly downwards. Alexander Mukha, an analyst with the Business Forecast Research Group, emphasises that loan rates will continue to fall this year. He tells us, "According to our estimates, the refinancing rate will continue to fall by 1-2 percent each month; by the end of the year, it may stand at 15-16 percent per annum. However, in my opinion, despite such big reductions, the attractiveness of Belarusian Rouble deposits will re-



Banks have already reduced interest rates on loans

main high. I think that the public will continue to keep their savings in the national currency, rather than foreign currencies. This will ensure dynamic and gradual development of the country's banking sector."

His opinion is confirmed by data recently published by the National Bank of Belarus, which states that enterprises and people kept more deposits in the national

currency than in any other in February. Belarusian Rouble savings by individuals rose by more than 13 percent, to reach almost Br28 trillion by early March. Deposits by legal entities in the national currency also rose in February, by more than 4 percent, to exceed Br28 trillion.

Meanwhile, foreign currency deposits are falling in volume: by almost 1.5 percent in February.

Interest on wave of modernisation

By Piotr Denisov

Czech business attracted by Customs Union opportunities

Jiri Ferenc, the Director of Czech FERMAT, recently met Igor Voitov, the Chairman of the State Science and Technology Committee of Belarus, noting his plans to construct a machine tool plant in Belarus. He adds that annual turnover should reach about 20-25m Euros, with around 70 percent of goods exported.

"We're aware that Belarus has approved a large-scale programme to upgrade its industrial complex and that new facilities are being established," notes Mr. Ferenc. "Accordingly, we're interested in setting up an industrial company to manufacture high-precision import-substitution machine tools in Belarus; we can reduce prices while boosting exports."

The head of the Czech company — which occupies a leading place in the sphere of metal processing and moulding machinery — views the Customs Union market as one of the most promising.

Mr. Voitov emphasises that the 2011-2015 State Innovative Development Programme envisages the establishment of thousands of manufacturing facilities, at local and regional level. He also accents that machine-building enterprises are being encouraged to master the latest technologies in their production of machine tools for foreign and domestic markets. Joint production in Belarus brings access to the markets of Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as those of third countries.

Investors selected according to profile

Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park presentations to be held in Harbin and Guangzhou in late April

The Economy Ministry of Belarus is joining forces with the Industrial Park Development Company to organise the event, gathering domestic companies interested in joint investment projects with Chinese partners.

Taking into account the Belarusian proposals on offer, our Chinese partners will invite relevant Chinese companies to conduct meetings, ensuring that time is spent efficiently on negotiations.

Investment projects at the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park need to meet a range of criteria. In particular, they should aim to develop production of electronics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnologies, mechanical engineering and new materials. Investments should be at least \$5m.

The Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park is located in the Minsk Region's Smolevichi District and was set up last year with the aim of promoting trade and investment co-operation with the People's Republic of China. It is attracting domestic and foreign investments into high-tech and competitive manufactures.