

Belarus, Cuba to cooperate in science, technology

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The State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba have signed a memorandum of understanding. The document was inked by heads of the two ministries, Aleksandr Shumilin and Elba Rosa Perez Montoya, in Minsk on 24 June, BelTA has learned.

The memorandum envisages the exchange of information and technical consultations on issues related to the development of Hi-Tech parks, cooperation in technology transfer, assistance to knowledge-intensive industries in both the countries through joint companies, interaction or planning.

According to the minister of science, technology and environment of Cuba, the signing of the document will bring experience sharing between the two agencies onto a new level. "We have an absolute interest in strengthening cooperation between the countries in the field of science and technology. We are very optimistic about it and we hope there are many practical achievements ahead," she told the media.

In turn, Aleksandr Shumilin said that Belarus and Cuba have been successfully cooperating for years: "The first agreement between our agencies was signed in 2012. In 2016, we held the first joint meeting in Cuba, which gave a significant boost to bilateral cooperation. In 2017, a delegation of Cuba visited Belarus to sign an agreement on the protection of intellectual property." The implementation of a joint project in biotechnology began in 2019.

According to Aleksandr Shumilin, Cuba is most interested in Belarus' innovative infrastructure construction practices. "We are going to discuss the implementation of joint projects today and the setting up of joint ventures (eyeing the countries of Latin America as well)," he added. The parties are also expected to discuss the sci-tech cooperation program for 2019-2020 and for 2021 over the long term.

Cuba is reforming its scientific sector, the chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology said. By the end of 2019, the country plans to open a center for nanomaterials and nanotechnologies.

The country is showing a big interest in Belarus' practices in the area. Cuba has recently made serious headway in healthcare and biotechnology. According to Aleksandr Shumilin, it would be reasonable to unite the efforts. "We have a number of chemical formulas for treating cancers.

Cuba has unique medications, too. Such medications are very expensive worldwide. Knowledge sharing and joint work on new medications can produce a very good result," he said. As for joint companies, the matter pertains, first of all, to the processing of agricultural products and the joint assembly of machinery with the possibility of its supply not only to Cuba but also to the countries of Latin America.

In January-April 2019, Belarus' exports to Cuba exceeded \$6.6 million, up 7% year-on-year. Belarus' exports comprise 83 commodity descriptions, mostly in automotive manufacturing and related industries.
