

This, of course, was a serious blow to the Ministry of Transport Construction and resulted in the sending of a letter requesting permission for work to be done in the head sector extending 189 kilometers to the station of Payuta.

It must be said that it was not just the railroad that "set the forest on fire". The real problem is the development of the Bovanenkovovo gas condensate deposit. Is it or is it not necessary? The scientists have doubts about it.

What is the reason for their doubts? V. Ryabitsev, laboratory supervisor at the Institute of Plant and Animal Ecology of the Ural division of the USSR Academy of Sciences, warns: "Yamal is a very young territory geologically. Hence, the natural complexes are also very young, immature, and more vulnerable than in other regions of the Arctic. The most likely scenario is as follows: as a result of large-scale denudation of the tundra, flooding, and a direct heating effect, Yamal's flat land composed of earth materials with a high ice content will literally melt and be converted into an archipelago of small islands. Western Siberia will then lose a gigantic climatic buffer mitigating the arctic cold, the taiga will be displaced southward for hundreds of kilometers, displacing in turn more southerly zones, including agricultural areas".

How close or far from the truth this forecast is, nobody knows as yet. An enormous amount of work must be done to permit us to see the contours of this disquieting future scenario and take the necessary measures before it is too late.

Specialists have also raised serious objections to development of the Yamal from the