



Zhuravliny agro-town, in the Brest Region's Pruzhany District, can act as an example to other rural settlements

City comfort in a village

Preserving rural settlements' identity is topical in our modern times

The President of Belarus recently visited Khimy, on the border of the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions. He noted that manufacturing facilities should be set up in villages to ensure employment but that villages should not be converted into towns.

Khimy has just 43 homesteads, including 35 dachas. The President has viewed the plan to revive

Khimy, which is to grow into an agro-industrial complex, with agricultural production. There are plans to create manufacturing and social spheres by 2015, while developing local engineering infrastructure. A facility to bottle mineral and fresh water is to be built, in addition to a confectionery factory. Fresh drinking water accounts for just 3 percent of the

Earth's water resources, while the share of easily available fresh water stands at 2 percent. At present, over half of all water available from the surface has been used. However, Belarus has great prospects for stepping up its bottling of fresh drinking water; there are assured reserves of fresh and mineral water near Khimy.

A confectionery factory is also

to appear in Khimy. As the Chairman of the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee, Alexander Kosinets, noted, this should be ready by early 2012. Mr. Lukashenko has approved the projects but stresses that this village must not be converted into a town. "Nothing should be done artificially," he said. A poultry factory is also to be constructed not far from Khimy.

Negotiations with foreign investors willing to take part in the project are underway. The pay-off period is estimated at five years.

"We should act like this everywhere. People have lived here for centuries. Let them continue to do so. It is necessary to establish an industrial basis. We'll develop the rest when the time comes," the President said.



Chernobyl affected regions see life returning to normal

Figures of the past decades reflect concrete actions

Government considers results of state programmes adopted after accident at Chernobyl nuclear power station

By Boris Yurovitsky

Four state programmes have been completed so far, costing around \$20bn. Since the catastrophe, about 20,000 residents from 470 towns and villages in the Gomel and Mogilev regions have been relocated, protecting them against radiation.

The programmes have given special attention to the provision of medical services for accident liquidators and the population from the most affected areas. The major accent has been placed on special medical surveillance, allowing early detection of illness and prompt treatment. Annually, around 1.5m people are examined free of charge,

with state funds paying for spa and resort treatments and recuperation, primarily for children and teenagers from the regions most affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. All pupils from secondary educational establishments within contaminated areas are provided with free meals at their place of study for the whole academic year (unlike in Russia or Ukraine).

In the sphere of socio-economic rehabilitation, the creation of normal living conditions is key; during the post-Chernobyl period, around 5m square metres of housing have been constructed for relocated residents: over 66,000 flats and houses. In addition, 239 settlements have

been built in 'clean' areas, boasting the necessary infrastructure and service enterprises.

At present, a programme is being realised to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe until 2020. The fifth state programme, like its predecessors, is socially-oriented. It envisages 76 innovation projects aimed at the socio-economic development of the affected regions. These encompass the creation of contemporary manufacturing to secure employment, being self-financing and producing marketable goods. Life within those areas affected by the Chernobyl accident is to become more comfortable.

Facts stronger than speculation

By Vladimir Mikheev

Labour and Social Protection Minister Marianna Shchetkina dispels rumours about tension in the employment sphere

"There is no tension on Belarus' labour market. The situation is stable and manageable, with no grounds for concern regarding employment," stresses the Minister. "519,000 able-bodied citizens are registered as unemployed (just to compare: in 2005, there were 842,000 such people). They fall into various categories: some are searching for a job independently without addressing labour, employment and social protection agencies, while others have seasonal employment. Others run private households or else have no desire or need to work. The figure is not critical, taking into account that 194,000 run their own private households. These are primarily women, who are bringing up their children."

According to recent data, the unemployment level in Belarus in early May stood at 0.7 percent of the economically active population (1.2-1.5 percent is forecast for the end of 2011). Unemployment is 1 percent

or less in 112 districts of the country's 130 (there are 118 districts in all, plus 12 cities of regional subordination). 18 districts have a figure of 1.1 to 1.5 percent — all under forecast levels. Those districts and small towns with higher levels are receiving special attention from ministries and regional executive committees, with 27 small towns and 7 districts included on the State Population Employment Programme. Specific measures are planned for each, to reduce tension on the district labour market.

"Since 2009, working hours have been monitored fortnightly at the most problematic organisations of the Republic, in order to react promptly where needed," stresses Mr. Shchetkina. "Certain companies are listed by local authorities, with the situation updated regularly."

The official notes the positive trend observed in entrepreneurial development. In the first three months of 2011, three thousand more individual entrepreneurs were registered than in the same period of 2010. At present, about 300,000 work as private businessmen in the country.

Easy to understand, open information

Over 10,000 visit Chernobyl and Belarus: Past, Present, Future exhibition in Geneva

The exhibition has been attended by the general public, alongside representatives of international organisations and diplomatic missions, journalists and the artistic elite. Children's drawings, photos and information booklets devoted to the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear power station and its consequences for Belarus were on show to mark the 25th anniversary of the tragedy. The works were displayed in a main corridor at the UN's headquarters.