

# Favourable business environment in focus

Narovlya District — most affected by the Chernobyl disaster — occupies leading position for small business development

By Larisa Velyaminova

Last year, this district of the Gomel Region was acknowledged best in the country (among settlements

sie Furniture Company in Polesie, shifting their hard and soft furniture production from Mozyr. "The decision was made after we found out about the pro-

It might seem insignificant but these details show the attitude towards entrepreneurs who run businesses here," stresses Boris.

The Gellers brought

employees. More jobs are planned for the future, as the family has huge plans. The company's move from a large industrial centre to a small town has not affected demand for its goods; in fact, it has more customers than ever. "It's vital to create a good reputation and image in our business," explains Boris. "We already boast this, as I'm extremely attentive to quality, giving us a good reputation with our customers — irrespective of our factory's location."

Narovlya residents are showing increasing interest in buying furniture which seems to indicate that they have disposable income. The entrepreneur's buyers tend to be young families from the neighbouring agrotown who are keen to make their homes more comfortable. "If someone wants to live well, they'll succeed; if they aren't driven, they'll find a dozen excuses," asserts Boris, who has a great deal of life experience. He previously emigrated to Israel, spending a year there before returning to Belarus,



At Polesskaya Furniture Company

believing that a new page had turned, with greater opportunities for success — especially for business. "I'm not yet close to becoming a US Dollar millionaire but I'm convinced I could be within a decade. The opportunities are there, so hard work is the key," he is convinced.

## Loans for business

Pavel Yelizarov set up Krolshtad Farm three years ago, specialising in breeding rabbits; he produces about 2 tonnes of meat monthly, which he stresses is free of radionuclides. Recently, the farm has begun breeding quails, which enjoy demand in Belarus and Russia, fetching a good price. In a picturesque spot, on the site of a former sanatorium, the farm has plenty of outbuildings, in one of which Pavel, his wife and two children live.

The entrepreneur used an interest free loan from the state to set up the farm and create 23 jobs. In fact, he's already repaid the loan and is applying for another — to revive the Soviet tradition of purchasing rabbits

from individual breeders. In the past, Narovlya residents were known as professional rabbit farmers, although few continue today, lacking buyers. A centralised system of purchase would once again inspire the development of rabbit breeding in the district.

Besides buying rabbit meat and fur, the farm would help breeders wishing to buy good quality rabbit feed and could offer advice and veterinary services. Such support is likely to attract local residents.

"The loan will allow my business to develop further," he emphasises. "Rabbits breed quickly so, in a year or two, every villager could have their own cages of animals."

Such businessmen are impressive in their optimism and confidence. They realise that profits and success don't come from thin air, requiring initiative and a desire to improve oneself. This is probably the key to successful business development in the region. Moreover, Narovlya residents have preserved their town 26 years on from the Chernobyl tragedy.



Acquaintance with Narovlya Hydraulics Plant

with up to 50,000 residents) for small business development — despite being located far from the regional centre. Moreover, it is one of the Gomel Region's three areas most affected by the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, feeling the full brunt of the 20th century's largest ecological catastrophe. What are the secrets of its business attractiveness?

## Coffee from tax inspector

Boris Geller and his son Stanislav founded the Pole-

gramme of small business support in towns. It ensures serious advantages to private initiative in such settlements: moderate taxes, several times lower rent and a favourable attitude on the part of local authorities. We were offered a choice of premises. Where else would the head of a district executive committee's economic department call personally to see how you are doing? Moreover, the tax inspectors offer us a cup of coffee when we come to report on income and payments.

their own team of furniture making specialists from Mozyr and their staff has been gradually growing, supplemented by new local

## Valery SHLYAGA, Chairman of the Narovlya District Executive Committee:

*When I took on the post of head of the district, I gave priority to the idea that both private and state owned enterprises should have equal rights. Clearly, we already had plenty of state run businesses but wanted to encourage private ownership. Red tape is the usual barrier in this respect so, to overcome it, we set up our Council for Small Business Development. It unites the heads of services, and myself; we've established a system whereby anyone can seek advice on running a business. If a project needs more time for co-ordination, an entrepreneur can be assisted by a curator (from the District Executive Committee and the Council) who helps solve all related problems.*

*At present, some spheres — such as trade and construction — are seeing more activity from private companies than from state run. They are undergoing modernisation and exporting abroad. Our small businesses are doing so well that we actually lack enough local workers.*

*I truly believe that both sectors need to work hard to ensure good results. District heads should assist ... as we are doing.*

## To the origins of ancient settlements

By Olga Sipakovskaya

### After 15-year break, archaeologists begin major digs on River Menka

Field excavations have begun in the village of Gorodishche (Shchomyslitsa Rural Council) where the rivers Ptich and Menka meet and where Minsk is thought to have been founded. Many interesting archaeological finds have been made in the area over the centuries as it was only in the spring of 1607 that the town was moved to where the rivers Nemiga and Svisloch meet.

"We're going to include this archaeological com-

plex among our tourist attractions as large and small ancient settlements remain; they just need proper form," asserts the Head of the Pre-Industrial Society History Centre at the History Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Olga Levko. "We're also working on a third edition in our series on the largest Belarusian cities, which will be dedicated to Minsk. The first two books have been about Vitebsk and Polotsk."

The excavations are due to take some time, involving students from the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, who have already arrived to help archaeologists.

## Portrait in demographic interior

Belarus is among top five CIS states in number of population

By Yelena Ponomareva

The Deputy Chair of the National Statistical Committee of Belarus, Yelena Kukharevich, has told a press conference that Belarus is ranked between Sweden and Somalia in terms of population. Among CIS states, Belarus retains fifth place: behind Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

As of January 1st, 2012, Belarus' population stood at 9,465,000 (9,461,000 as of March 1st). The average population density in Belarus is 46 people per square kilometre with cities obviously far more densely populated: the Vitebsk



Region boasts just 30 people per square kilometre (the least populated) while

Minsk has over 6,000.

In 2011, the Belarusian population fell by 16,000

people. "This is equivalent to a town such as Oshmyany or Stolbtsy disappearing from the map," notes Ms. Kukharevich.

The trend of decline continues, since the number of those dying exceeds the number of newborns. The natural decline totalled 26,000 last year, with the recent trend for migration gain only partially compensating. In 2011, migration surplus reduced the natural decline by 38 percent. Most areas are seeing a similar situation, with a rise in population only registered in five districts: Minsk, Mozyr, Brest, Dzerzhinsk and Ostrovet.