

# Polesie's subsoil rich in minerals

## Gomel's Polesie-Lelchitsy Industrial Park awaits strategic partners and investors

By Svetlana Burkova

The Gomel Region is richer in minerals than the others in Belarus, with most found in the West, in Polesie: shale, potassium salts, oil and brown coal. Of course, many areas are still unexplored but Gomel's Polesie-Lelchitsy Industrial Park hopes to attract investors, launching a new plan by 1st September to develop the districts of Lelchitsy, Zhitkovichi, Petrikov, Yelsk and Mozyr, covering over a million hectares (almost 30 percent of the Gomel Region).

All these districts have specific characteristics. The Mozyr District is probably the most developed socio-economically and industrially, with its oil refinery supplying 42 percent of industrial oil to the Republic. The others focus on farming at present, while boasting the Peat Briquette Works and the Engine Building Plant in Zhitkovichi, as well as the Granite Crushed Stone Plant in the Lelchitsy District. The latter supposedly has the hardest granite in Europe — even more so than the granite of Mikashevichi — with deposits found easily in shallow sites below ground, and, sometimes, even on the surface.

Such treasures require financial support to enable extraction and building of logistical infrastructure. Lelchitsy, for example, has long dreamed of having a railway, since the nearest is 200km away, in Mozyr (a six hour bus journey). Naturally, a railway connection would help the development of the district. The 121km Glushkevichi-Lelchitsy-Mikhalki line is to connect these mineral deposit sites with industrial centres across the region and should be ready by 2020. The new railway will reduce transportation costs 5-6 fold, allowing 13 million tonnes to be transported annually, as well as passengers; 15 settlements are situated near the mining sites.

The first step towards creating the Polesie-Lelchitsy Park was taken at the Gomel Economic Forum, attended by the Regional Executive Committee, Belarusian Railways, the Ministry of Architecture and Con-

struction and Triple JSC; a quadripartite agreement was signed, aiming to develop mineral deposits and build the Polesie railway.

Polesie's subsoil is rich in fuel

Districts also boast deposits of spropel, which is used as a phosphate fertiliser. Reserves are being mined near Lake Chervonoe and a processing plant is planned for the Petrikov

tract, reserves of potassium salts are thought to amount to 1.5bn tonnes; Belaruskali is already taking the first steps to build a new mining enterprise.

Crushed Stone Plant able to process 800,000 tonnes a year. Around \$6m is needed. Investors are also sought for an open-cast granite mine, called Nadezhda (Hope). In Kamenya, granite reserves are being developed; local stone is beautiful enough to be used for finishing inside buildings. Another two deposits — Berezinskoe and Zhitkovichskoe — are situated in the northern part of the Industrial Park.

Building sand is also essential, with 34 deposits found across the five districts; only a few are yet developed — all by building and road organisations.

Tourism is another promising sphere for Polesie-Lelchitsy, since the Park encompasses the reserves of Pripyatsky, Zhitkovichsky, Middle Pripyat, Mozyr Ravines and Strelsky, as well as the Pontic Azalea Plantation Natural Monument. The historical and cultural heritage of the region includes 167 sites known for their architecture, history or archeology and there are nine recreational zones. The Chair of the Economics Committee of the Gomel Regional Executive Committee, Elvira Karnitskaya, tells us, "The region is not only unique historically but naturally, being a real Belarusian Ruhr. The development of mineral deposits, construction of processing enterprises and the opening of a railway will be a strong stimulus to developing the industrial park. In the long term, the towns of Mozyr, Zhitkovichi, Lelchitsy, Petrikov, Yelsk and Turov, as well as others, are sure to expand greatly; new towns will probably be built and the economic structure of the industrial park regions will be transformed."

We can only hope that investors will see the possibilities from the unification of these rich territories, with their corresponding infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, Polesie residents are friendly, hard-working and love their homeland, being keen to see it revived; they dream of their children finding employment locally, so that they can continue to live there, delighting in the beauty of Polesie's natural landscapes.



Broken stone, lignite and peat extracted in Gomel Region

and energy resources in the form of brown coal, shale and peat deposits: all of strategic importance. Industrial reserves of brown coal have been explored at Zhitkovichi and Brinev, in the Zhitkovichi and Petrikov districts, as has the major Turov oil shale deposit in the central part of the region: total reserves are 2.7bn tonnes. Shale oil is a raw fuel with great potential for use in the chemical industry and in the production of building materials.

The Zhitkovichi and Petrikov

District. In the Lelchitsy District, they have begun to realise a complex project to develop spropel deposits in five directions, under the guidance of the Environmental Management Institute at the National Academy of Sciences.

Not far from Mozyr, rock salt deposits of around 500 million tonnes have been located, which can be used to produce calcium salts; a strategic investor is now sought for the project. Meanwhile, in the Petrikov Dis-

The region is also rich in 'building materials'. The Lelchitsy District's granite deposit at Glushkevichi is being developed, near the border with Ukraine, and is soon to gain a railway station. In addition, Country Cornfield Gomelobldorstroy is building a Granite Crushed Stone Plant, able to process 2 million cubic metres of stone annually. The Gomel Economic Forum saw another investment agreement signed: with a Russian company — to build another Granite

## Export potential for construction projects

### Krichev factory produces pilot batch of 'dry' cement

A new cement facility with an annual production capacity of 1.8m tonnes trialed its first batch of 'dry' cement in late May, with success. The enterprise is now conducting further operational tests — to check for cracking. Krichev attracted over Br1trillion in investment last year, via loans from Chinese Eximbank and from Belarusian banks. The new facility is to focus on 'dry' cement production.

In late 2012, Krasnoselskstroyaterialy JSC also brought a new technological line into operation, with a capacity of 1.8m

tonnes of cement annually. The Belarusian Cement Plant (situated in Kostyukovichi) launched a similar line in July 2012.

Together, these three plants should be able to produce up to 10m tonnes of 'dry' cement annually, with the existing lines already covering domestic needs. Their man-



ufacturing capability will aid exports and help in producing new cement-based construction materials, for use in Belarus and for sale abroad.

## Mutual projects oriented at the future

### China ready to raise investments into Belarus

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus, Gong Jianwei, notes that major projects are being implemented in the energy and cement industries while, in Borisov, assembly of Belarusian-Chinese automobiles has already been launched.

This year sees the start of reconstruction of the M-5/E 271 Minsk-Gomel highway and construction of a hydroelectric power plant in the Vitebsk Region, alongside a facility producing sulphate bleached pulp (with an annual output of 400,000 tonnes) at Svetlogorsk Pulp and Paper Mill JSC. Mr. Jianwei emphasises, "We need

to move forward, expanding areas of co-operation. I see huge potential in the financial-and-currency sector, as well as in informational support and agricultural processing. Today's volume of direct foreign investments is insufficient but many credit lines have opened." He comments that Chinese companies are showing interest in the modernisation of flax production and in the Belarusian flax industry as a whole. The Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park is another important area of bilateral co-operation, promoting manufacturing, research, housing construction, trade and provision of services. It's expected that large transnational companies will join Chinese investors in coming to Belarus.