

# Energy accumulated by lowland marshes

Unique electric station of the future for Bereza District's reserved areas

By Sergey Sokolov

Sporovsky Reserve, one of Polesie's largest lowland marshes, is truly unique in Central Europe (regarding its area and natural preservation). It has recently been chosen as a venue for a major ecology-energy project, whose successful realisation would significantly contribute to the matters of energy saving and ecological revival. Moreover, its experience could be duplicated across other Belarusian reserved areas. A photo-electric station is supposed to create an 'impulsive flare' for the promising future, and the facility's construction is to start this year on Sporovsky's territory.

The reserve covers areas of the Bereza, Drogichin, Ivanovo and Ivatsevichi districts but the station is to be built in the Bereza District (20km from the district centre); its photo-batteries would be able to transform solar light into direct current. The idea is somewhat symbolic as, in the late 1950s, the largest electric station (exceeding the total power of all existing Belarusian electric plants) was established near Bereza. The new facility has no such goals, but nobody knows what might hap-



Photo-electric station easily transforms solar power into electric energy

pen in the future. In modern days, the weather is extremely capricious and, in several decades time, solar energy would probably join nuclear power as one of the dominant Belarusian energy sources.

"The new station is a part of our promising project," explains Sporovsky's Director, Vadim Protasevich. "We also plan to build an educational centre focusing on biological resources and alternative energy." Actually, the Sporovsky facility is a training centre in itself. Apart from generating additional electric

energy, it would accumulate economic nuances of similar projects. "Our present calculations indicate that a 100kW station would produce around Br30m of monthly profit, which would be further used to solve the nature protection problems of Sporovsky and other reserves in the region," adds Mr. Protasevich.

Apart from heading the reserve, Mr. Protasevich also chairs the local Brest Region Reserves ecological fund, which has signed an agreement with the Global Environment Fund's *Small Grants Programme* to finance

the project (worth \$243,000). Construction terms are impressive. At the moment, the facility exists on paper only but its launch is planned for late 2014.

No doubt, solar energy is a promising branch and, with this in mind, solar electric stations are planned for the Smorgon and Shchuchin districts. In addition, solar energy is already generated at some Belorusneft fuel stations: in Silichi, Gomel and Ivanovo and a photo-electric station already operates at the Belarusian Gas Processing Plant.

## From Minsk to Vilnius without delays

By Svetlana Semenova

**Belarusian Railway accelerates the transit of cargo and passengers across the border**

Last year, almost one hundred million passengers were transported on the main line. The railway also managed to increase the volume of cargo it shipped up to almost 50 million tonnes. "It is the greatest volume among countries with using 1,520 millimetre track," said the Head of Belarusian Railway, Vladimir Morozov.

Vladimir Morozov paid attention to the constructive interaction of railwaymen with state customs and border committees on the acceleration of crossing cargo and passengers through the Belarusian border. As an example, he named the crossing of passenger trains in service from Minsk to Vilnius, and the Viking container train where all border procedures and passenger customs control were carried out on-the-go, and the survey of cargo trains at checkpoints lasted less than an hour.

## Experience proves real usefulness

Belarus is regional leader in terms of improvement of financial literacy of its citizens

By Mikhail Semenov

The Executive Director of the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), Alfred Hannig, told journalists that the level of financial inclusion in Belarus is very high. "Belarus is the first member of our organisation from Eastern Europe. It's a regional leader in the study of such issues as the measurement of financial inclusion and the improvement of financial literacy of the population. The experience of Belarus in this area could be useful for other AFI members," noted Mr. Hannig. "In total, about 85 percent of the population has

access to at least one of the banking services."

The AFI Executive Director came to Belarus to discuss the expansion of bilateral co-operation with the National Bank, and to review the preparations for the upcoming meeting of the AFI working group on consumer rights and behaviour, hosted by Minsk in March 2014. The meeting of the working group in Belarus has become a kind of recognition of the significant progress made by the National Bank in improv-

ing access to finance, including the protection of consumers of financial services, and its active work in addressing these issues.

At present, the National Bank is developing a proposal for a new AFI grant — *Promotion of Regional Co-operation in the Area of Access to Finance in Eastern Europe and the CIS*.

The AFI is an international organisation, based on the membership of national institutes from various countries (central banks, finance and economy ministries) and is aimed at promoting the development of national financial systems. The AFI provides support to its member states by building national strategies, aiming to improve access towards finances and giving short-term and long-term grants to aid their implementation. The AFI currently unites 114 organisations from 93 countries around the world.



## Searching for oil in 3D

By Vladimir Samsonov

**Belorusneft Association seismologists start taking seismic measurements in Western Siberia**

This seismic work in the northern latitudes is part of the contract signed with the Russian company Geoseis Technology. The Russian company is part of the famous Geoseis Holding and performs geological prospecting, geophysical and geochemical research concerning the exploration and reproduction of mineral resources.

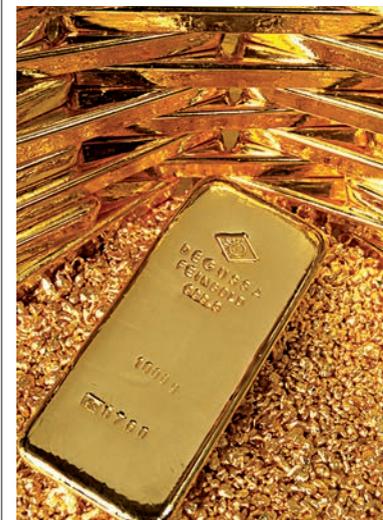
Belarusian professionals are expected to take 3D measurements in Khanty-Mansiysk and Nadym Districts, as well in the Nizhnevartovsk District. Two teams of specialists from the company's field seismic exploration division will be involved in the work, which is supposed to be completed this April.

Seismic exploration services abroad represent an important part of Belorusneft's activities. At present, Belorusneft specialists are busy studying sub-surface resources in Venezuela and Ecuador with a view to prospecting hydrocarbon deposits in these countries.

According to preliminary assessments, the volume of hydrocarbon extraction by the Belarusian enterprise at the Western Siberian deposits should total at least 200,000 tonnes by 2017 — up 50 percent compared to the previous year.

## Hefty reserve

**Belarus' gold reserves rise over a tonne in six months**



As of January 1st, 2014, Belarus' gold reserves reached 35 tonnes, according to the National Bank. The volume of the state fund of precious metals and stones (in gold equivalent) is recalculated every six months. On July 1st, 2013, it totalled 33.8 tonnes, making it a rise of 1.2 tonnes.

The National Bank stated that 'the increase is due to the purchase of gold on the domestic and international markets, and to the restructuring of the gold reserves'.

According to the country's major bank, Belarus' international reserve assets, calculated in line with the International Monetary Fund's standards, made \$6,650,000,000 (preliminary data) as of January 1st, 2014.