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President Mugabe receives a gift from visiting Russian Federation Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Mr Georgy V. Kalamonov at State House in Harare yesterday

Farirai Machivenyika Senior Reporter

The second phase of the \$3 billion platinum project in Darwendale, a joint venture between Zimbabwe and Russian companies, is expected to start next year, with visiting Russian Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Mr Georgy Kalamonov, yesterday expressing satisfaction with the progress made so far.

This phase involves construction and commissioning of two underground mines and the second processing plant, while additional mines would be constructed in the third phase expected to start in 2022.

Mr Kalamonov disclosed this in an interview after paying a courtesy call on President Mugabe at State House.

"We are making everything according to schedule and now we have the first step and I think in March next year we will have the second step," Mr Kalamonov said.

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He said another delegation led by the Minister of Industry and Trade Mr Denis Manturov, would visit the country in April and would also attend the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo.

The Great Dyke Investments is a joint venture project between the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation and three Russian companies, VI Holdings, Rostec which is a technical partner and Vnesheconombank, the financier.

The first phase was mainly for exploration and setting up infrastructure and commissioning of the first stage of facilities for mining.

Mr Kalamonov said they discussed various ways of strengthening relations with President Mugabe.

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"We discussed various issues on mining projects and agriculture projects. We have a huge mission of 20 people who have come here to explore various businesses they can do in the future," Mr Kalamarov said.

Earlier in the morning, Mr Kalamarov met Foreign Affairs Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, who also thanked the Russians for their steadfast support for Zimbabwe in the past decade in the face of hostilities from Western countries.

"At the political level, we have had excellent relations right from the liberation struggle when the then USSR helped us with military hardware to execute our war. In 2008 the Russian Federation, when the West hatched a plot that Zimbabwe posed a threat to world peace and wanted us to be sanctioned under UN Chapter 7, which would have destroyed us, the Russian Federation and China saved us with a double veto," Minister Mumbengegwi said.

He, however, said the strong political ties were not matched with the levels of economic relations saying there was need to improve them for the mutual benefit of the two countries.

"In the economic sector we started late but now that we have started let's gather the momentum," he said.

"I know you have interest in mining and agriculture and in mining we can set up joint ventures and do exploration because that is an area we have not done enough and then the mining, value-addition and beneficiation. If we can be able to focus on the whole value chain then we can mutually benefit."

Mr Kalamarov also bemoaned the low levels of trade between the two countries saying he would want them to rise.

"I totally agree that judging from the figures of trade they do not reflect the relations. Figures of \$30 million to \$40 million do not reflect our cooperation, hundreds of billions of dollars should be our target."

He thanked President Mugabe for attending Russia's celebrations to mark the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War.

The Russian delegation also held closed door meetings with their Zimbabwean counterparts under the framework of the Joint Commission.

The Russian delegation comprises government officials and others drawn from the country's private sector.

During the visit Russia pledged to continue supporting Zimbabwe against the West's aggression and also pledged more economic cooperation.

President Mugabe has also sealed mega deals worth millions of dollars with another Asian country, China in the areas of energy, mining, infrastructure development among other key economic enablers.

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Pane anokwanisa ku testify to the progress ye venture iyi here? I have not seen or heard anything from anyone beyond what is in the papers? I have been giving the government the benefit of doubt but now i want to hear the progress from independent sources. Takers?
Better still, Herald pihwaika a tour of the site, publish and lets celebrate something positive for once.
While you are at it, request a tour of Lupane as well. We want to see the gas project in pictures, and hear how it has affected the communities around it.
In fact, good journalism goes beyond attending briefings and meeting seeming powerful people in their seeming cushy offices and regurgitating some baseless and ridiculous

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numbers/figures. Get off your backsides and give us some real news, good or bad! We can stomach both. just missing some hardcore stuff, that would make you and me, and even Mugabe and Tsvangirai shudder.

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Leo • 5 months ago

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I think you can guarantee that they are giving him more than toys...

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Hokoyo, the russians will do more than simply impose sanctions if they feel their assets are being abused, and lets face it that is what our govt is good at (abusing foreigners).

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