A handshake at the German embassy in Pretoria settled it: about EUR 20 million will be invested in Kindel industrial estate over the next years, and both the number of staff and production will double by 2020. Bell currently employs almost 100 people in Eisenach.

“Bell Equipment’s plan to invest here is a great boost to our networking efforts in South Africa,” said Tiefensee in Pretoria, promising also to support the investment by helping Bell make the most of its entitlement to state aid. Chief Executive Gary Bell said it was vital to grow the company’s plant and activity at its site in Thuringia: “Sixty per cent of our turnover already comes from the northern hemisphere, and Europe is a very important market for us and one that is growing all the time.” Support from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the State Development Corporation of Thuringia was the main reason Thuringia was chosen as the location, with proximity to key suppliers and key customers and markets a close second.

One of the largest utility vehicle manufacturers in South Africa, Bell Equipment received assistance from the State Development Corporation in 2003 to set up in the Eisenach-Kindel industrial estate, where it manufactures construction equipment, earthmovers and articulated dump trucks for the European market. Every week, around 17 vehicles leave its factory in Thuringia. (td/maa)
**News**

Erfurt – Applications are invited for Thuringia’s recently launched “Funding for Research, Technology and Innovation” programme. EUR 200 million has been made available to fund research and development projects undertaken by companies and research institutes and to upgrade the business-related search infrastructure. “Innovation is the most important growth driver for our economy,” says Thuringia’s Minister of Economic Affairs, Wolfgang Tiefensee. And in Mexico – the strategically important market at the interface between Europe, North and South America – Thuringian entrepreneurs took first steps to scout out the market opportunities.

In spring, two continents were already on the travel agenda: South Africa was the destination for a delegation of business and science led by the state’s Minister of Economic Affairs, Science and Digital Society, Wolfgang Tiefensee. And in Mexico – the strategically important market at the interface between Europe, North and South America – Thuringian entrepreneurs took first steps to scout out the market opportunities.

At the beginning of September a delegation is heading for the Russian republic of Tatarstan led by the Chairman of the State Development Corporation, Andreas Krey. In connection with the celebrations marking the first anniversary of the establishment of the German-Russian Institute of Advanced Technologies (GRIAT) in Kazan, the Center for Mechanical Engineering is presented. This center shall facilitate involvement by Thuringia’s mechanical engineering companies in modernizing Russian manufacturing companies.

Later in September, the Thuringian Economics Minister will lead a business delegation to Brazil. Apart from the 33rd German-Brazilian Business Days in Joinville, company visits, matchmaking events and an investors seminar are scheduled.

The last big trip this year will be to Israel. A delegation from Thuringia will visit Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa in October, under the leadership of Thuringia’s Minister President, Bodo Ramelow, and Minister of Economic Affairs Wolfgang Tiefensee. In addition to the usual business appointments, they will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel. (td/maa)

**An interactive look at the automotive industry in Thuringia**

Manufacturing processes in the automotive industry are many and varied, and a great many of them are represented in Thuringia. The state’s location in the center of Germany and Europe means that automotive suppliers are handy to everywhere and have the best possible base for economic growth. Five highways connect Thuringia to all major cities and manufacturing centers. A truck can be in any major city in Germany within five hours.

The virtual car application shows: there is no component and which cannot be provided by the Thuringian automotive industry.

Now there is an interactive application that reveals the expertise and breadth of automotive production happening in Thuringia, right down to the tiniest component. From A to Z, they’re all there: Adam Opel AG to Zwerrenz Automatisierungstechnik GmbH and everyone in between. All the details can be found at www.virtuelles-automobil-thueringen.de, where interactive simulation lists not just the companies but also all the vehicular components made in Thuringia. From chassis, interior trim, control panels and instruments to the electrics, bodywork and engine – the virtual car shows which elements and components are made by which of the automotive suppliers in Thuringia. It is very obvious, even after just a quick look, that the automotive sector in Thuringia can provide virtually every skill and supply almost every vehicle part. All the information is available in German, English, Russian, Chinese and Spanish. (td)

**High-level innovation**

More staff, greater turnover, greater prospects – the biennial growth report for the optics industries in Thuringia, produced by the photonics cluster OPTONET, is a positive one.

Sales by the 175 companies and 9 research institutes have risen to EUR 2.85 billion since the last report two years ago. The number of people employed in optics is 15,200. 66 per cent of the turnover comes from export, a figure which is well above the average for the state and shows how competitive products from Thuringia are on the global scene. The main markets are in western Europe, North America and China. The sector’s success is due in no small way to the innovativeness of its companies. This makes research and development crucial, and the report shows that approximately 10 per cent of total turnover is reinvested in R&D, (maa)

**Dates**


> 5 – 7 October 2015 EXPO REAL – International Trade Fair for Property and Investment, Messe München (Munich Trade Fair Grounds)

> 12 November 2015 9th Thuringia Automotive Day (Exposure Day) – NAFTA markets (USA, Canada, Mexico) – KVT Conference Center, Weimar

**High-level innovation**

Not only does Thuringia’s business ‘landscape’ feature a pattern of small- and medium-sized businesses, it is also rich in history. With the reunification of Germany, which opened up a new world of business opportunities, the number of businesses in Thuringia skyrocketed in 1990 and thereafter. We owe much of Thuringia’s present economic strength and energy to the entrepreneurs and forward thinkers of that time, who seized the day. 2015, of course, marks a quarter of a century since those momentous events, and ‘Thuringia Focus’ would like to introduce you to some of the key players. In this issue: LAYERTEC GmbH in Mellingen.

1989, Friedrich Schiller University in Jena: on the yet small science campus in Thuringia a young physicist, a student and an engineer are working together to develop special laser mirrors, fiddling about with measurement technology and testing new production processes. The group breaks up in the wake of political upheaval and profound changes to the research environment. Shortly afterward, the physicist, Hartmut Heyer, makes a decision that will change his life: in 1990, he sets up his own company, called ‘LAYERTEC’, a word he invents to convey the idea of ‘optical layers’ and ‘technology’. His two friends from university days join him, along with a host of other experts, including optics experts, engineers and physicists. Since 1992 LAYERTEC has developed unique laser technology components as a major supplier to the German laser industry. Meanwhile, the company employs 170 people and will celebrate a quarter-century of success. ‘Thuringia Focus’ wishes LAYERTEC continued success and all the best. (id)

**Technology News**

Essen – Waltershausen machine builders Häcker Automation GmbH is the winner in its category of businesses with up to 50 employees in the “Top 100” innovation competition. The award was presented by Top 100 mentor Ranga Yogeshwar at the German Medium-sized Businesses Summit in Essen in June. It is the second time Häcker Automation has been named Top Innovator; the first was in 2011. The company specializes in micro- and nano-components, which can be up to 10 times thinner than a hair. At present it is concentrating on the open innovation platform ‘OurPlant’, which is about to be introduced. In the company’s team is on board, too, and tries to attract investors for Thuringia. (hard G. Paulus)

Jena – In the latest ranking of universities and other tertiary institutions by German weekly ‘Die Zeit’, in conjunction with the Centre for Higher Education (CHE), the physics faculty at Friedrich-Schiller University (FSU) in Jena was rated the best in Germany. “No other physics faculty was ranked in the highest category across so many criteria,” said the proud head of the faculty, dean Professor Gerhard G. Paulus. (maa)

Hartmut Heyer, company founder and general manager. Source: LAYERTEC GmbH

**Founded in 1990: East German companies are celebrating their 25th anniversary**

Hartmut Heyer, company founder and general manager. Source: LAYERTEC GmbH
From 27 August to 6 September, synagogues, churches and public buildings throughout Erfurt became venues for ACHAVA, a 10-day festival with concerts, tours, discussions and other events to promote interfaith cooperation. The State Development Corporation of Thuringia provided one of the concert venues, the ‘Heizwerk’ in Brühl. A former heating plant and imposing industrial monument, it has wonderful acoustics that are ideal for music performances.

The Hebrew word achava means ‘friendship’ or ‘brotherhood’, an important topic for reflection in contemporary cosmopolitan society, standing as it does for communication and understanding, tolerance and mutual respect. The ACHAVA Festival provided insight into Jewish culture and paved the way for intercultural dialogue in Thuringia. (td)

Due to the unprecedented demand, tickets for ‘standing places’ were sold for the final day’s performances for the first time ever. Director Guy Montavon staged the French version of the opera, with recitatives by Hector Berlioz, giving von Weber’s work entirely new, surprising components. Complemented by a stunning play of colors, the open-air performance created an eerily beautiful atmosphere that really took spectators’ breath away.

Next year’s summer opera will be Puccini’s ‘Tosca’. A whiff of Italian enchantment is already in the air and pre-sales of tickets have begun. (td)

Jewish culture in Thuringia

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Festival fever in Thuringia

There’s always something on the calendar in Thuringia, but especially so in summer. Countless concerts, open-air performances, festivals and markets are on offer for everyone who wants to spend summer days and evenings in cities, towns and even villages. From the Cathedral Steps Festival in Erfurt, to the Kulturarena in Jena, the Sonne-Mond-Sterne Festival in Saalburg, the dance and folk festival in Rudolstadt and the cultural festival at the ruins of the Benedictine monastery at Paulinzella – festivals and outdoor celebrations attract thousands of visitors all summer long.

Even as the days gradually grow shorter, there are still many wonderful events in store. The traditional onion market in Weimar merits special mention. The state-wide highlight of the second weekend in October, it began in 1653 and has long been one of Thuringia’s most popular folk festivals. There will be live music at multiple outdoor venues, jugglers and stalls selling traditional favorite onion dishes and the Onion Market Queen will be chosen. (td)