Malawi has produced cement, coal, crushed stone for aggregates, dolomite, limestone, and some artisanal salt for domestic consumption in recent years (table 1). The country also has produced small amounts of lime. Malawi has been known to produce various gemstones, such as agate, amethyst, aquamarine, garnet, rubies, and sapphires. The severe decline in gemstone production in 1997 was partially attributable to a combination of the Asian economic crisis (Balazik, 2000, p. 31.3), the overvaluation of Malawi’s currency, and a slowdown in domestic economic growth. In particular, the country’s industrial sector averaged an annual growth rate of 0.9% from 1990 through 1997 (Newafrica.com, December 30, 1999, Malawi economic development and indicators, accessed March 1, 2001, at URL http://www.newafrica.com/economy/malawi.asp). Other possible causes include reliance on sale of stockpiles and resource depletion.

Coal from the Mchenga Mine and limestone were essential components of the country’s cement and lime industries. The production of stone for aggregate and cement was a major component of Malawi’s mineral industry.

The country also has known deposits ofapatite, bauxite, corundum, glass sand, granite, graphite, kaolin, kyanite, monzanie, phosphate, pyrite, tourmaline, uranium, and vermiculite. Bauxite deposits on Malanje Mountain were estimated to have a resource of nearly 29 million metric tons (Mt) grading 43.3% Al₂O₃. The high-calcium marble deposit on Malowa Hill has an estimated resource of 22 Mt grading nearly 8 Mt of limestone. Kangankunde Hill has an estimated resource of 11 Mt of monazite and strontianite at a grade of 2.0% rare-earth oxides, especially oxides of cerium, lanthanum, neodymium, and praseodymium, and 8% strontium. The Kayerekeke uranium deposit in the North Rukuru Basin has a resource of more than 11,000 metric tons of U₃O₈ from ore grading 0.17%. Phosphate deposits at Thundulu have an estimated resource of 2 Mt grading 17% P₂O₅ (Ministry of Energy and Mining, 1997).

In 1999, Malawi’s gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to about $9.4 billion at purchasing power parity; this was an increase of 4.2% compared with that of 1998. Per capita income was $940 at purchasing power parity in 1999. Industry accounted for about 29% of GDP and at most 15% of export earnings (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2000, p. 305).

Malawi consumed 857 million kilowatt hours of electricity in 1998. Hydroelectric power sources provided 97.61% of the country’s electricity and fossil fuel sources accounted for the remaining 2.39%. Malawi had about 28,400 kilometers (km) of roads, of which approximately 5,300 km were paved; the rail network covered nearly 800 km. Waterways included Lake Malawi and the Shire River (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2000, p. 305). In December 1999, the Mozambican railway company CFM/SDCN (in which the U.S. concern Railroad Development Corporation had a majority stake) took over the management of Malawi Railways from the Government.

The outlook for Malawi’s mineral industry is tied to the Government’s ability to face strong challenges, such as spurring exports, improving educational and health facilities, facing up to environmental problems of deforestation and erosion, and dealing with the rapidly growing problem of HIV/AIDS.

References Cited


Major Sources of Information

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e/ Estimated.  
1/ Estimated data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.  
2/ Table includes data available through February 2000.  
3/ In addition to commodities listed, modest quantities of unlisted varieties of crude construction materials (clays, sand and gravel, and other stone) may also be produced, but information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output levels.