



Newsletter
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Belarus in this week

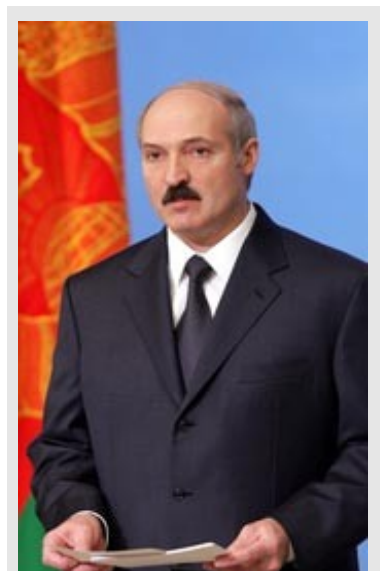
European Union's new strategy vis a vis Belarus was unveiled on Tuesday, 21 November, in Brussels and Minsk. The EU offers concrete material support if Minsk enters a path of democratization. The Belarussian authorities and the democratic opposition have presented divergent views on the EU document. A representative of the Lukashenko regime described it as another manifestation of the policy of dictate, while the press secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Andrej Papouh branded it as 'absurd'.

According to the opposition leader Alexander Milinkievič the Brussels proposal came at the right moment. 'This is a document which confirms that Belarus is important for the EU, that the EU is waiting for democratic reforms in Belarus and that it is ready to give us sizeable material assistance.'

The price for Russian gas in 2007 continues to be in the centre of attention of the Belarussian authorities. Gazprom wants the prices of energy products to be delivered to Belarus next year to be based on the evaluation made by the Bielatrangaz concern. According to many analysts, the shape of Russian-Belarussian military cooperation will have a bearing on the price of natural gas.

In the run-up to local government elections in Belarus, opposition leaders have pointed to violations of the electoral procedure by the authorities. The names of persons who did not take part in the elections in the past are being crossed out from voters' lists.

In a sensational development, President Łukašenka has announced that the results of the presidential elections in March 2006 were rigged. He said he received 93,5 per cent of the vote, whereas the official result given to the public was 86 per cent.



Łukašenka: the results of the presidential elections were rigged

Repressions have been continuing against representatives of the Belarussian opposition. The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution on human rights in Belarus speaks of growing repressions against members of the opposition, political prisoners, journalists and members of NGOs. Members of the 'Third Road' Civic Initiative have been accused of abusing the president in the films on the organization's website. A member of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Stanisław Paczobut, has been arrested for five days on charges of hooliganism. The trial was held behind closed doors. In detention Paczobut began a hunger strike.

Alexandar Kazulin, former presidential candidate, has been on hunger strike in prison for over a month now. His condition seriously deteriorated this past week. More opposition politicians have joined the rotational hunger strike in solidarity with Kazulin,

The Alliance of Leftist Parties has been formed in Belarus. Its leaders say this is the first step in the unification process of the country's leftist political organizations. The Alliance is to lobby for the release of the leftist leader Alexander Kazulin.

On Thursday, November 23, the oldest Belarussian-language newspaper – Naša Niva – celebrated the centenary of its foundation. On the eve of its jubilee, it received an official warning from the Ministry of Information of Belarus. Since 2005, 'Naša Niva', as most opposition publications, has not been available in kiosks. It cannot be ordered by subscription either.

Editor-in-chief of Nasza Niva, Andrej Dyńko has received the 'Freedom of Speech' Award from the International PEN and the Dutch foundation 'Oxfam Novib' in recognition of his services for the freedom of expression and the free media in Belarus. ■

Alaksandar Milinkievič detained by militia in Vitebsk

A leader of the Belarussian opposition Aleksandar Milinkievič was detained Thursday night by traffic militia on the entry road to Vitebst. The information was given to newsmen by the politician's Pavał Mažejka.

The militiamen told Milinkievič that his appearance was very similar to that of a man who caused a fatal accident. He was released and apologized for the incident.

Right now Milinkievič is collecting signatures on behalf of candidates who are to run for councillors' seats in the forthcoming local elections.

His Eminence Cardinal Kazimierz Świątek has been decorated with the Order of the Commander of the Legion of Honour

The ceremony took place in the residence of the French

Ambassador in Minsk on 23 November. The former head of the Roman Catholic Church in Belarus, now in retirement, is the first Belarussian citizen to have received this high distinction from the French president. The citation describes the Cardinal as a man who 'in the eyes of the French people epitomizes the history of the Belarussian nation of the last 70 years'.

In his acceptance speech, the Cardinal said the distinction was for him a mark of respect and recognition of the Belarussian nation', informs the website catholic.by

Cardinal Świątek added that it was a recognition of the courage and dignity with which the entire Belarussian nation has fought for its right to sovereignty. He said he was grateful to God for having been able to be with the nation in both the difficult and happy moments.

Dutch ABM AMRO Bank soon to present an independent evaluation of Beltransgaz concern

At the beginning of December, ABM AMRO Bank of the Netherlands is to present an independent evaluation of Beltransgaz concern, agencies report quoting Belarussian government sources.

The Russian 'Gazprom' wants to purchase a part of the shares of the national gas operator 'Beltransgaz' in exchange for setting prices for Russian gas for Belarus at a low level.

Initially, the Belarussian side estimated the concern's value at 5 billion US dollars, but recently Łukašenka said the price of 'Beltransgaz' was 17 billion US dollars. According to Russia, the price is overvalued. Hence the evaluation is to be conducted by an independent firm.

10th anniversary of the All-Belarus referendum

Today is the 10th anniversary of the All-Belarus referendum. Most of international organizations and the Belarussian opposition say that the results of the referendum, held on 24 November 1996, were rigged.

In line with the referendum results, the majority of the inhabitants of Belarus supported the amendments to the country's constitution. They gave the president far greater powers, including the right to issue decrees, at the same time limiting the powers of the Parliament.

In an interview with the BelaPAN Agency, the lawyer Siarhiej Bałykin said that according to the constitutional amendments, the validity of the president's prerogatives is counted from the moment of the introduction of the amendments. 'It can be said that 10 years ago Belarus made the first step from the republic to a monarchy. The second step was made in the autumn of 2004, with the annulment of limitations on the number of terms-of-office which a president can serve', Bałykin said.

Alaksandar Milinkievič was detained in Vitebsk

A Belarussian opposition leader Alaksandar Milinkievič was detained Thursday night by traffic police on a road to Viciebsk. Pavał Mažejka, the politicians press secretary, informed the media about the incident.

The policemen told Milinkievič that his appearance was very similar to that of a man who caused a fatal car accident. Later they released the politician and apologized for the incident. Right now Milinkievič is collecting signatures on behalf of candidates who are to run for seats in local councils in the forthcoming local elections.

Alliance of leftist parties in Belarus

The Belorussian portal tut.by. informs that the Party of Belarus communists, the Socialdemocratic Party (Hramada) and the Belorussian Women's party 'Nadzieja' (Hope) have signed an agreement on forming an alliance of leftist parties.

The leader of the communists Siarhiej Kalakin said during the ceremony that this is only the first step of the unification process of the country's leftist political organizations.

According to Alena Jaškova from the the Belorussian Women's party 'Nadzieja', the main goal of the alliance is to restore democracy and the rule of law in Belarus.

Deputy chairman of Hramada, Anatol

Laukovicz hopes that all the parties will now lobby for the release of Alexander Kazulin, the former presidential candidate.

80th anniversary of the Jakub Kolas Theatre

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenka has congratulated members of the Jakub Kolas Theatre on the 80th anniversary of their company.

The BELTA Agency writes that the president said: 'Your company is continuing the artistic exploration; mindful of the tradition, it remains open to bold experiments'.

Hunger strike in solidarity with A. Kazulin

More Belarussian politicians have joined the rotational hunger strike in solidarity with the former presidential candidate Kazulin, who wants a UN debate on Belarus. They are the leader of the United Civic Party Anatol Labiedžka and Deputy chairman of the Socialdemocratic Party Hramada, Anatol Laŭkovič, informs the website of Charter'97.

Some fifty people have taken part in the rotational hunger strike so far.

Alaksandar Kazulin has been sentenced to five and a half years of penal colony for 'hooliganism and the organization of and participation in illegal actions'. He began a hunger strike in October 2005. He has lost 30

kg in weight since his detention 8 months ago.

Jubilee of 'Naša Niva'

The oldest periodical published in the Belarussian language is celebrating its centenary in Vilnius, informs the Information Agency of Polish Radio.

On the eve of the jubilee, the Ministry of Information of Belarus has issued an official warning to 'Naša Niva', the opposition weekly. After two such warnings in a year the authorities are able to close the publication.

The official reason for the issue of the warning was the editors' failure to include the weekly's 'legal address' in its columns. This year 'Naša Niva' was forced to change the address of its editorial office four times. Editor-in-chief Andrej Dyńko says that the weekly has had problems in obtaining the 'legal address'.

Andrej Dyńko has just received the „Freedom of Speech” Award from the International PEN and the Dutch foundation 'Oxfam Novib'.

The award is in recognition of the journalist's services for the freedom of expression and the free media in

Belarus.

Since 2005, 'Naša Niva', as most opposition publications, has not been available in kiosks. It cannot be ordered by subscription either. It is distributed by independent organizations and can also be accessed on the Internet.

United Nations resolution on Belarus

The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution on human rights in Belarus. 70 countries voted for, 31 were against (including Russia and China) and 67 countries abstained. The resolution was motioned by the United States and EU member states.

According to ITAR-TASS, the document speaks of growing repressions against members of the opposition, political prisoners, journalists and members of NGOs in Belarus. The United Nations accuses the Belarus authorities of violating international standards regarding the conduct of just and free elections.

The UN calls on Belarus to restore the electoral process in line with international standards.

Photo of the week



Belarusian government has forgotten about centennial of the first Belarusian newspaper "Naša Niva". BNF (BPF) Youth activists hung out a congratulatory banner in the center of Minsk.
(Photo by © [litota](#).)