



Newsletter
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The fact that the Belarusian PM appeared on 3 October in the Lithuanian capital has been evaluated positively by the supporters of Belarus' return to the family of European countries. Officially, Sergey Sidorsky's visit was related to opening in Vilnius an exhibition concerning Belarusian industry. However, PM Sidorsky met not only representatives of economic circles but also his Lithuanian counterpart Gediminas Kirkilas. Such prestigious meetings of Belarusian officials in the EU are very seldom.

It may be assumed that Sidorsky's visit in Vilnius will turn out an impulse for developing the cooperation between Belarus and Lithuania in terms of investment, transport and, most of all, energy.

It is worth reminding that in previous years similar visits of PM Sidorsky to Riga and Warsaw, where Belarusian exhibitions were also opened, did not take place because of scandals initiated by the KGB, when Polish and Latvian diplomats were thrown out of Belarus.

It is also noteworthy that the Belarusian PM visited Vilnius just a day before the energy summit of the Baltic, Black and Caspian Sea region planned for 10-11 October. The summit will be held in order to discuss the possibilities of diminishing energy dependence on Russia.

Sidorsky also discussed the possibility of lowering fees for Lithuanian visas for Belarusian citizens.

Since Lithuania, Latvia and Poland are to join the Schengen zone, visas have become a burning issue for Belarusian citizens.

Therefore the issue was simultaneously discussed in Warsaw, where inter-ministry talks of foreign ministries' delegations were held. The Belarusian request was taken into account and it was settled that new conditions of issuing visas in Poland's consulates will come into force 1 December.

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Additionally, Poland agreed not to raise consular fees for issuing visas till 31 December 2007.

It is planned that all reductions and simplifications allowed in the Schengen zone which concern obtaining visas by different categories of citizens will apply to the new conditions.

Meanwhile, merchants on many of Belarus' markets went on strike 2 October refraining from work for one day.

Authorities initiated a meeting between representatives of entrepreneurs and executive authorities. Problems of small enterprises arising from the President's decrees No.# 302 and No.# 760 were discussed. So far, entrepreneurs have been protesting to no avail. However in the face of uniting the forces of strikers and the opposition as well as a predicted substantial rise in prices, the political situation in Belarus may become hectic.

The Belarusian opposition is pinning its hopes on the European March due 14 October as well as Social March due 4 November.

Illustrious European politicians have been invited to the European March. Authorities have not yet responded to the opposition's offer of talks. Repressions against the initiators of the March have not ceased.

Former president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel thinks that at present it is important for the Belarus opposition to focus on the issues which will draw the attention of the West. The major problems remain releasing political prisoners and stopping persecution on the basis of different political views.

OFFICIALLY

Bridge built in Mohylev over Dubravienka river.

Authorities hope that the ecological situation in the city center will improve.

The Vilnius bridge linked the city centre with the Kosmonautow street. Municipal authorities are convinced that this will ease the traffic on the Mir Prospect and the Pierszomajska street. In order to improve the ecological situation, a new trolleybus route is to be built on Wilenska street. Research evidenced that 75% of air pollution in Mohylew is caused by public transport.

At the same time the bridge over Dubravienka completely changed the look of

one of Mohylev's oldest streets – Wilenska street.

As recently as two years ago there was a winding slip road at the beginning of the street by Theatre Square. Now, an overpass embankment appeared there, blotting out neglected buildings from mid-20th century.

Now the overpass only allows to see freshly painted roofs of pre-revolution buildings.

The overpass cost \$16 m. By way of comparison, renewal works of the Mohylev town hall cost a meager \$2 m.

Death rate going down in Belarus

According to statistical data in the last half-year around 90.000 people died, 4% less than in the respective period of the previous year.

The decreasing death rate is the result of lower number of deaths from cancer, circulatory and respiratory illnesses.

Fewer people die of social pathologies – alcoholism and murders. However, death rate in road accidents increased. For instance, in the Mohylev province there were 50% deaths in road accidents.

POLITICS

Representatives of over 70 communist and workers' parties will gather in Minsk on 3 October

The Belarus capital will host the International Convention of Communist and Workers' Parties in connection to the 90th anniversary of the Socialist Russian Revolution.

Preparations are done, among others, by the Communist Party of Belarus. The programme includes excursions to factories and kolkhozes. Nothing is known about the sources of financing the meeting. The communist Party does not have as many members as to cover all the expenses from their donations. The organizers also did not come across any obstacles when booking conference rooms.

SOCIETY

Will the entrepreneurs' protests prove fruitful?

In Minsk and some of the country's regions private shops have ceased to work. This is how shopowners protest against Regulation 760, which makes re-registering of economic activity compulsory. Around 30.00 people took part in the protests all over Belarus.

According to the head of the "Perspektywa" social organization, Anatol Szumczanka, such protests do not guarantee expected

results, because the scant number of protesters. He added that the strike would have been more fruitful if entrepreneurs in all of Belarus' cities joined in.

Anatol Szumczanka emphasized that many of the shopowners did not know about the strike or did not comprehend the reason for not going to work on this particular day. The head of "Perspektywa" thinks that meetings and negotiations with authorities are more fruitful.

OPPOSITION

The Municipal Court in Minsk upheld the sentence in the case of Andrzej Klimaw, former deputy of the 13th tenure parliament

He will spend the next two years in a penal colony with increased rigour. The opposition member was accused of exhorting to topple the present state authorities.

The trial was held behind closed doors. Only the defendant's wife and his lawyer were allowed to attend.

In order to support his colleague from Witebsk the former MP and human-rights defender Valery Szczukin came to Minsk.

V. Szczukin: This is a standard procedure. First the defense speaks, then the prosecutor rises from his seat and says there are no grounds for overturning the sentence. The court then leaves to discuss the matter and comes back to state that there are no grounds for overturning the sentence.

This is Klimaw's 3 criminal sentence. He spent 4 years in prison for economic wrongdoing. He had to spend another 15 months in a penal colony for organizing a street action on Independence Day in 2005.

ECONOMY

Belarus citizens to pay for using the “Olympic” route

Due to lack of funds for renovating Belarus’ main arterial line, the so called “Olympic” route, a fee for using it will be introduced for the citizens of Belarus .

So far only foreigners had to pay. The road from Brest to the Russian border is 610 kilometres long. A single fee amounts to around 1.000 Belarusian rubles. However, there are 4 barriers on the motorway. Payments are to be made at all of them. As a result, one will have to pay 4.000 rubles in total.

CULTURE

Belarus Festival was held week ago in the Saint Kiryla Turauski Cathedral in New York

This is a yearly event which is part of the “Atlantic Antic” International Fair. A ceremonial liturgy in relation with the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Following this event, an exhibition by a Belarusian artist Uladzimir Nowak was opened in the Belarus Museum at the Orthodox church in New York. It was a retrospective of 27 oil paintings. One of them was presented to the parish by the author.

“Our objective is to preserve the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and with it the culture and art of Belarus as well as making Americans familiar with our traditions”, said member of the Parish Board Mikola Sahanowych when opening the festival.

The cathedral in New York will soon be celebrating its 50th anniversary. For this event it will be renovated. Renewal works have been in progress for some years now. They are sponsored and carried out by the Belarusian community in the United States.



There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The site belarus-live fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.

