



Austrian bank will invest 1.3 billion dollars

Austrian's Raiffeisen Bank will invest the equivalent of 1.3 billion dollars in Belarusian business during 2007, a senior government official said on Monday. The one billion Euro sum will go into Belarusian banking, manufacturing, fund investment, and export financing, said Sergei Sidorskiy, Belarusian Prime Minister, according to a Belapan news wire report.

Sidorskiy made the announcement after meeting with Patrick-John Butler, a Raiffeisen board member, in the Belarusian capital Minsk. The prediction if accurate would mark the largest foreign investment by a non-Russian company in Belarus, since Belarus became independent in 1991. Raiffeisen has operated in Belarus since 2002 through a controlling interest in the Minsk-headquartered Priorbank. The operation largely services European corporate customers with business in the former Soviet republic.



Source:
German Press Agency

February 23, 2007

Belarus is For Sale (Investors Be Cautious?)



2007 New Year oil and gas conflict with Russia could cost Aleksandr Lukashenko more than simply a budget deficit. Belarusian Economy Ministry has prepared a vast program of state enterprises privatization. Talks with investors have started on some of enterprises. Belarus is getting ready for considerable foreign loans. So why should foreign investors be cautious? 2006 was finished with a credit balance deficit of \$1.663 billion, or about 4.5% of GDP by Belarus. Gas price hike from \$46.7 to \$100 per cubic metre and imposing an oil duty for oil to Belarus by Russia (\$53 per cubic ton) would cost \$2-2.5 billion for the country, Belarusian economists believe. That's why Belarusian Economy Ministry offers to hold contests on selling large oil refineries and chemical enterprises in 2007, including "Naftan" oil refinery, Mozyr oil refinery "Polimir", "Belshyna", Grodno "Azot", Mogilev "Khimvolokno".

Also a possibility of converting enterprises into joint-stock companies with the further aim of selling to strategic investors largest Belarusian unitary enterprises, like Minsk Automobile Plant, Beltelekom (monopolist on communications and Internet market), Belarusian cement plant, Grodno tobacco factory "Nyoman" is offered for consideration. A possibility of selling state parcels of shares of large enterprises of food industry like Minsk Plant of Sparkling wines, Gomel fat-products industrial complex, Skidzel Sugar Industrial Complex, Haradzeja Sugar Industrial Complex, Zhabinka Sugar plant. It is supposed to sell 30-40% of shares of largest breweries, joint stock company Krynitsa and malt joint stock company Belsolad. But analysts believe that in reality the development of such a vast privatization program was rather "a panic reaction" of Economy Ministry to the consequences of energy resources prices because Belar-

us is not ready for any foreign investment at all. Belarus remains a country which is very inhospitable for foreign investments. According to the national law, government can get control over earlier privatized enterprises back any time.

That is why any "hard-driving" privatization campaign would be impossible without Belarusian legislation alteration first. Under Aleksandr Lukashenko, who holds office since 1994, privatization has a pinpoint character in Belarus. All large enterprises are owned by the state. If implemented, the program of Economy Ministry would mean a radical change of economical policy of Belarus in general. Is it possible to invest in the country with no future profit guaranties? Where the main economic policy is: "You invest – But I (Lukashenko) and my pocket government, we'll pocket all your profits!" As was mentioned once by the former Minister for External Economic Relations Mikhail Marinich: "To attract foreign investors, to make the domestic output competitive and to realize the country's economic potential, radical modernization of industry, new system of management, training of new managers, property rights guarantees are required. These ideas seem revolutionary to the present Belarusian authorities and I doubt that they are able to implement them. The issues of investment in Belarus economy have no power system and legislation remain untouched."

Source: American Tribune
February, 2007

Inside this Issue:

Austrian Bank will Invest 1.3 billion Dollars 1

Belarus is for Sale (Investors Be Cautious!) 1

Lukashenko's Followers Join the Presidential Race 2

US Imposes Sanctions on More Top Belarusian Officials 2

Belarus Cabinet's Directive Aimed Against Freedom of Speech - Journalists' NGO 2

Strategy of United Democratic Forces of Belarus Presented in Washington 3

Lukashenko, Dubai ruler discuss cooperation development prospects 3

BPF Youth congratulates the Police on Their Professional Holiday 3

Announcements 4

Lukashenko Followers Join the Presidential Race

A movement willing to put forward Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko to run for Russia's presidency in 2008 has emerged in Russia. The key purpose of the initiative is to offer the choice to the Russians and Lukashenko, *Telegraf* by reported referring to Alexey Kanurin, leader of the Lukashenko 2008 Organizing Committee.



Lukashenko is unaware of forthcoming nomination, Kanurin said. "We don't need it. Our purpose is to create the situation of having a choice, including for Alexander Grigorievich. One thing is a policymaker's decision whether or not to go to elections, but the all-people decision is a different matter," Kanurin explained. Policymakers, and Lukashenko is a successful policy-maker, don't miss such chances."

Kanurin said the movement is backed up both morally and financially but didn't disclose the sources, emphasizing, however, that "the Moscow City Hall, [Gazprom](#) or RAO UES won't be our sponsors for sure." "But we certainly have the national support, including material and technical and financial ones," Kanurin said, pointing out they are ready "to double propaganda and information flow."

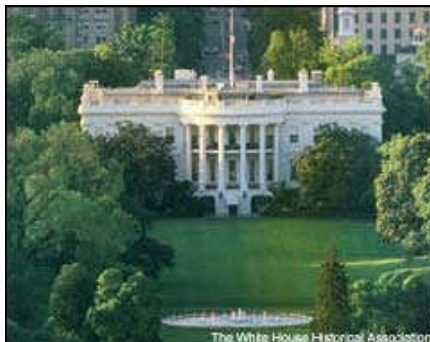
Under Russia's laws, only the RF citizen of at least 35 years of age, who has permanently lived in Russia for at least ten years, could become the country's president. Russia will elect its president March 2, 2008.

Source: Kommersant

February 26, 2007



US Imposes Sanctions on More Top Belarusian Officials



The United States has imposed economic sanctions against six more senior Belarusian officials because of their crackdown on the opposition to what the U.S. says were fraudulent presidential elections last year.

Those named in Tuesday's Treasury Department order include Belarus's top prosecutor, the education and information ministers and a lieutenant colonel of the Minsk riot police.

All their U.S. assets have been frozen, and U.S. citizens are barred from doing business with them. Earlier sanctions were imposed on 10 other Belarusian officials, including President Alexander Lukashenko.

The U.S. Treasury's director of foreign assets control, Adam Szubin, says those who commit human rights abuses and political repression have no place in civil society.

President Lukashenko was re-elected to a third term last March in a vote the United States and European Union call fraudulent. President Bush has called Mr. Lukashenko Europe's last dictator.

Source: Reuters

February 26, 2007

Belarus' Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov Comments on the Results of His Meeting with Director General of CEI Executive Secretariat

Today we had a meeting with Director General of the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat, Ambassador Harald Kreid.

We discussed the issues of Belarus' participation in the Organization, and CEI perspectives.

I would like to stress that Belarus is an active participant of the Central European Initiative.

We believe the Organization plays a special role in Eastern, South-Eastern and Central Europe, and provides for expanded bilateral and multilateral integration within the "large" Europe. Belarus actively participates in implementation of CEI funded projects.

We agreed to continue our cooperation, and shared our common interest in a definite new perspective positioning of the Organization.

Source: Belarusian FM

March 1, 2007

Belarus Cabinet's Directive Aimed Against Freedom of Speech - Journalists' NGO

In what many view as a move to discourage government officials from contacts with independent media outlets, the Belarusian cabinet has threatened punishment against officials whose comments given to the media contain "biased" or "incorrect" coverage of the country's economic situation.

"I request you to ensure control over public statements (interviews, articles) of civil servants to the media, including the non-state press," said a confidential letter signed by Deputy Prime Minister Andrey Kabyakow that was sent to all governmental agencies on 22 February.

The letter warned that officials whose remarks appearing in newspapers and other media outlets would misrepresent the economic situation would face a disciplinary action and may be even sacked. The deputy prime minister directed that all governmental agencies should closely study media reports and alert the Information Ministry if they discover any biased

"Take measures to disseminate objective information to the public, including by publishing official statements, denials, etc.," the letter said.

Zhana Litvina, chairwoman of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, expressed fears that the directive would completely block the private media's access to first-hand government information. "Apparently, this means that current processes in the economic sphere are not manageable," she told Belapan. "That's why it is the priority task of government agencies to withhold information from people, prevent them from analysing and discussing it."

"This is yet another document aimed against the profession of journalist and freedom of speech. Reporters will find it extremely hard to obtain information," Litvina said.

Source: BelaPAN

March 1, 2007

Civil Initiative "We Remember" Addresses UN Secretary-General



Widows of disappeared Belarusian politicians and public activists, the leaders of civil initiative "We Remember" Irina Krasouskaya and Sviatlana Zavadskaya sent a letter to the UNO General Secretary H.E. Ban Ki-moon asking him to prevent minister for internal affairs Uladzimir Navumau's participation in the International conference in New-York. Head of the MIA of Belarus Uladzimir Navumau suspected by the world public in connection with the oppositionists' killing and kidnapping has been delegated by the Council of Ministers to the conference on human trafficking issues which is due to be held from 4 until 7 March in New-York under the aegis of the UNO.

The full text of the letter can be found here:

<http://democraticbelarus.eu/node/903>

Strategy of United Democratic Forces of Belarus Presented in Washington

On March 4 a visit of a delegation of Belarusian democratic forces to the U.S. has finished. The delegation consisted of the leader of the Belarusian Popular Front party Vintsuk Vyachorka, the chairman of the United Democratic party Anatol Lyabedzka, First Secretary of the Party of Communists of Belarus Syarhei Kalyakin, a wife of the political prisoner Aryan Kazulina and a chairman of a working group of the Non-governmental Organizations Assembly Syarhei Matskevich.

They arrived to the U.S. on February 27.

On March 2 a meeting of the Belarusian delegation with representatives of the Foreign Ministries of 9 European countries, including Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and other Baltic States and states of Northern Europe was organized in Washington. A Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs David Kramer took part in the meeting. Belarusian politicians told about the political situation in the country and presented a strategy of the united democratic forces.

"We have been asked a lot of concrete questions," the UCP press-service quotes Anatol Lyabedzka. "It shows that Foreign Ministries of Northern European countries are well-acquainted with the general situation and with some of the finer points of the developments in Belarus.

As said by the UCP leader, representatives of foreign ministries were interested what Europe could do to change the situation in Belarus. "In this connection we expressed our critical attitude towards the position of the official Brussels, which does not have a clear strategy and plan of actions towards Belarus. However, we had to do justice to them for drawing up a document with

proposals of the European Union for Belarus and its citizens," A. Lyabedzka said.

Representatives of Belarusian democratic forces have addressed a session of a round table with fifty representatives of American state institutions, NGOs and mass media. "They have demonstrated their great and genuine interest in Belarus and events in our country," the UCP leader said.

Earlier Belarusian politicians met a number of U.S. Congressmen. In particular, at a meeting with the Chairman of the U.S. Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe Alcee Hastings a possibility of holding Congress hearings on the problem of political prisoners in Belarus. The Belarusian delegation has also met with Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.



Source: Charter 97

March 5, 2007

Lukashenko, Dubai ruler Discuss Cooperation Development Prospects

Prospects of developing the cooperation between Belarus and Dubai were discussed today by Belarusian head of state Alexander Lukashenko and UAE vice-president, prime minister, defence minister, ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum.

BelTA reported earlier, the Belarusian leader is paying an official visit to the United Arab Emirates on March 4-6. Today Alexander Lukashenko has also held negotiations with UAE president, Abu Dhabi ruler Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The leaders of the two countries shared opinions about possibilities of expanding the cooperation, primarily, the cooperation in trade, economy, and investments.

The Belarusian president stressed, the country has specific investment proposals for the emirate side to consider.

According to the Belarusian side, private

investments in tourism and real estate are most promising. Hotel industry and civil engineering projects can also become prospective.

Today members of the Belarusian delegation hold bilateral meetings with emirate counterparts and partners. Several bilateral legal documents are expected to be signed in Abu Dhabi.

Source: BelTA

March 5, 2007

BPF Youth Congratulated Militiamen (the police) with Their Professional Holiday

The "BNF Youth" organization held the action dedicated to the militia day. At 6 p.m. the BPF Youth activists presented the militiamen with carnations tied with white-red-white ribbons at the Minsk railway station.

Ordinary patrolmen were reluctant to take the flowers explaining that they were prohibited to take anything but they thanked for congratulations with bewildered smiles. Then the activists

decided to enter the militia department located in the railway station building and congratulated the militiamen on duty who were eager to accept the flowers.

At the end of the action the participants moved to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and forwarded the congratulating appeal to Uladzimir Navumau.

"Dear Belarusian militiamen! On behalf of the youth of Belarus we sincerely congratulate you with your professional holiday! We, citizens of our Motherland, and our militia ought to defend together peace and FREEDOM, pluralism and democracy, human rights, all those, which our glorious land is lacking", the appeal runs. The militiamen on duty took the flowers and promised to pass the appeal to Ul. Navumau. The youth presented the rest of the flowers to the militiamen who were on duty in the Minsk metro. They happily accepted the flowers. Nobody was detained during the action.

Source: Charter'97

March 5, 2007


Announcements


Minsk. Kalinouski Square. March-2006

Date: 15/03/2007
Time: 19:00
Grand Prix Bar
 Parc du Croquantenaire, II
 (Brussels - Brussels)
 Directions:
<http://www.democraticbelarus.eu/>
 Contact:
 Office for a Democratic Belarus
 - 1050 Brussels
 www.democraticbelarus.eu

Photo exhibition about Belarus and the post-election protests of March 2006

Performance of the Free Theatre:
 "Being Harold Pinter", "Generation Jeans"





MINSK, KALINOUSKI SQ, MARCH 2006
 HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. JMS ARE FULL RELATIVES OF THE ARRESTED ARE NOT BEING TOLD ANYTHING. PEOPLE BRING WHITE-RED-WHITE FLOWERS TO THE SQUARE, BUT THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY THROWS THEM AWAY.

To mark the one-year anniversary of the Belarusian Maidan—post-election protests in Minsk in March 2006, which resulted in hundreds of arrests and mass repression—the Office for a Democratic Belarus in Brussels is doing a series of events under the title "Minsk. Kalinouski Square. March 2006".

The events are organized under patronage of the Delegation on Relations with Belarus in the European Parliament and in close cooperation with the Art United group (artunited.blogspot.com)

On **March 15**, the Free Theatre, an underground group from Belarus will present two of their plays—Being Harold Pinter and Generation Jeans.

"Generation Jeans" – monologue about jeans, rock-music, and freedom. The story begins in the Soviet Union where jeans, rock-music were prohibited. If you sell jeans you will be caught by the KGB. The story transforms from that time to the current days of the dictatorial regime of Belarus through the story of arrests of the main hero, his friends, through kidnappings. This is an ode to the generations of people who do not have age frames and who fight for freedom of their country. Every country has this generation. The hero talks about Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia generations...

How is a play being born? What is the difference between the truth in life and the truth in art? Is an artist meant to be dealing with politics? These

are the questions Harold Pinter raises in his Nobel speech. A play **"Being Harold Pinter"** by Free Theater begins and finishes with the search of the answers to these questions.

On the same evening, organizers will also present an exhibition that includes photos of a well-know Belarusian photographer Andrei Lyankevich depicting Belarusian nature and people, and showing what was happening on the Kalinouski Square after the election 2006. In addition, there will be some works done by a British photographer Vincent Mondy and Nikolai Khalezin from the Free Theatre (Belarus).

The **March 24** soiree will begin with presentation of the movie Ploshcha (Square), a work by the famous filmmaker Yury Khashchavatski. The film tells better than any words about the events of last spring in Minsk.

After the movie presentation, Slovak singer Petra Jordan will give a **concert** combining her own work with a selected number of cover songs especially written for the occasion. Petra Jordan is one of the co-founders of the Art United. Art United particularly promotes cooperation among artists from what was previously referred to as Eastern and Western Europe, which includes countries within and outside of the European Union.

Our contacts

Office for a Democratic Belarus

Rue Wiertz 50 / 28 – 1050 Brussels

Tel: (32) 2 401 64 41(42), Fax: (32) 2 401 68 68

www.democraticbelarus.eu

Date: 24/03/2007
Time: 19:00
Grand Prix Bar
 Parc du Croquantenaire, II
 (Brussels - Brussels)
 Directions:
<http://www.democraticbelarus.eu/>
 Contact:
 Office for a Democratic Belarus
 - 1050 Brussels
 www.democraticbelarus.eu

19:00
Screening of the movie
Ploshcha (Square)



21:00
Concert by Petra Jordan



MINSK, KALINOUSKI SQ, MARCH 2006

ArtUnited

www.petra-jordan.com