



OFFICE FOR A
DEMOCRATIC BELARUS
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Belarus Headlines Headlines

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Foreign Offenders to Be Deported

The Administrative Offence Code of the Republic of Belarus and the Penalty Procedures Code of the Republic of Belarus about administrative offences come into force. This legislation introduces a new measure of administrative punishment - deportation for foreign citizens and stateless persons for committing a range of administrative offences (earlier this procedure was regulated by the Immigration Law of the Republic of Belarus of 29 December 1998). Deportation as administrative punishment can be applied to foreign citizens and stateless persons as an additional measure of punishment not only for violating the residence and transit regulations in the Republic of Belarus but also for illegal crossing of the Belarusian state border, violating the customs or border crossing regimes. This measure of punishment will be administered according to the nature and consequences of the offence, and the offender's personality. The new Administrative Offence Code also improved the mechanism to protect a person undergoing an administrative trial, as well as appeal and protest procedures against deportation. The list of documents (a Belarusian visa, migration card, valid passport, short-stay permission or registration) has also been clarified to define case of administrative offence.

A deported foreign citizen or stateless person will be banned an entry to Belarus for a certain period of time. The new regulations say that it will depend on the circumstances that resulted in deportation and may vary from 1 to 10 years.

Source: belarustoday.info

Government adopts 2007 program of support of small enterprises

The purposes of the program are: to obtain the projected figures regarding the development of small enterprises, improve regulations governing the operation of small enterprises, provide small enterprises with financial and property support, improve the support and development infrastructure, and others. The government plans to provide 3,368.4 million rubels for the implementation of the program. Belarusian banks are to allocate one billion rubels for lending to small enterprises.

Source: BelaPan
March 5, 2007

Belarus, United Arab Emirates Sign Agreements on Air Service, Military-Technical Cooperation

Five bilateral documents were signed in Abu Dhabi on March 5 as a result of Alyaksandr Lukashenka's visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In particular, according to the Belarusian leader's press office, the sides signed agreements on air service, on military-technical cooperation, and on cooperation between Belarusian State University and the University of the UAE.

Mikhail Pawlaw, chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee, and the head of the Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Agriculture signed an agreement on the establishment of partner ties between the two capital cities.

The foreign ministries of Belarus and the UAE signed a memorandum of mutual understanding and cooperation in the security sphere.

It was the second visit of Mr. Lukashenka to the UAE. The first one took place in March 2000.

Source: naviny.by
March 5, 2007

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Belarus Security Introduces Blanket Monitoring of Internet Surfing

Blanket monitoring of Internet users has been introduced in Belarus. All specialized cafes are now registering not only the names of the users but also all the sites they visit and for how long. At the same time, nobody knows for sure what is included in the forbidden list. The customers are outraged, the proprietors of the cafes are facing losses while security service staff describe this as a necessary preventive measure. If earlier the Belarus Internet cafes knew who has come, from now on they will know where people go, or, in plain speak, what sites the customers visit. All this is called prevention of possible offences. Internet-cafes have been monitored in Belarus already for several years. Quite recently each of them had to diligently maintain such log books.

But now the sites that the client visits are being registered too. It was a decision by the Belarusian Council of Ministers. And the log book is now not on paper but in an electronic form. It must be kept for at least 12 months. This electronic log must be made immediately available to security or state control bodies at their request. If the administrator notices that a customer commits something illegal when using the computer, he must report it.

When a person logs on to a computer he must realize that if he commits a crime, he should be ready to accept the fact that some time later he will hear a knock on his door and he will be asked to give explanations on legal grounds. The situation is under control, the security bodies maintain. The owners of Internet-cafes, however, are almost in panic. They anticipate falling profits. Customers are unhappy about the monitoring too.

Source: redorbit.com

March 12, 2007

Embassy of Venezuela Opened in Minsk

Embassy of Venezuela has been opened in Minsk. This was reported by temporal charge d'affaires of the Bolivar Republic of Venezuela Americo Dias Nunies to the BelTA correspondent.

The diplomat is certain that 2007 will become the key one in developing the Belarusian- Venezuelan cooperation. At present, the agreements made during the official visit of President of the Republic of Venezuela Hugo Chaves to Belarus are being realized. The parties agreed on establishment of the strategic alliance of the two countries as well as on the joint implementation of projects in the trade and economic spheres.

For the last half year, 56.4 thousand tons of Belarusian potash fertilizers to the amount of USD 11.2 billion were delivered to Venezuela. For example, last September 25 thousand tons of the products were delivered and these January-31.4 thousand tons.

Americo Dias Nunies is sure that there are wide perspectives for developing economic, cultural and political cooperation. The Venezuelan government considers cooperation with Belarus in many spheres as strategic.

Temporal charge d'affaires stressed the importance of the fact that both Belarus and Venezuela have similar views of the necessity of establishment of the multi-pole world.

Source: charter97.org

March 13, 2007

Belarus Activist Detained and Then Released

A prominent opposition activist in Belarus was detained and then released on Wednesday, the 14th of March in what colleagues said was an attempt to disrupt a planned rally.

Vintsuk Viachorka, long prominent in campaigns against President Alexander Lukashenko, was picked up by police as he returned home Tuesday evening.

He was released nearly 24 hours later, but told to appear in court two days before the rally on charges of unruly behavior, specifically for swearing outside his apartment building.

A lawyer for Viachorka's Belarussian Popular Front said it had taken him hours to find out where his client was detained. "They later escorted him out of a detention center and said he could go home," said Vladimir Labkovich. "According to the documents, he is to appear in court on March 23 on charges of swearing outside his home." Another activist, Vyachaslau Siwchyk, was also released.

Source: [The Moscow Times](http://TheMoscowTimes)

March 15, 2007

Lukashenko Says Belarus Applied For \$1.5 bln Loan

Belarus has applied for a U.S. \$1.5 billion loan from Russia to pay for energy resources, President Alexander Lukashenko told. According to him, the loan was discussed during "the major row, which ended in a gas and oil conflict."

"I told the Russian administration they could raise energy prices as high as they wished, but we were unable to pay for gas and oil until our economy recovered. We told Russia to support us [and thus provide indirect support for their own companies] for decent interests. The Russian side promised to consider this issue," Lukashenko said, quoted by his press service.

At the same time, according to him, "the situation is far from catastrophic". "Our GDP keeps growing almost 10% every month [compared with the 2006 figures], but this loan will help us prevent any destabilization," the president added.

Belarus and Russia plan to hold consultations in mid-March about the extension of a U.S. \$1.5 billion state loan to Belarus, Russia's Deputy Finance Minister Sergey Storchak told. "We expect a Belarusian delegation to arrive in Moscow for consultations next week," he said. He added that the application of the Belarusian side "was spontaneous, and we need to understand whether the situation is hard, and whether the loan is critical to Belarus," Storchak said.

Storchak said the Belarusian request was somewhat "unexpected" and Minsk will need to give sufficient grounds to the Russia government as the sum will be a serious burden for the budget. He said it was a matter of billions of dollars, and the loan might become a huge burden on the Russian budget. Besides, the budget law does not envisage relevant expenditures, and

March Events in Minsk Recalled in Brussels

Cultural events dedicated to the anniversary of the March 2006 demonstrations in the center of Minsk started in Brussels. In the framework of the project, an exhibition of Minsk photographers and two plays of the Free Theatre headed by Nikolai Khalezin were demonstrated in Grand Prix Bar in Brussels. The events have been organized under patronage of the Delegation on Relations with Belarus in the European parliament and with support of the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Slovak delegation in the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament.



Grand Prix Bar is situated in the center of Belgian capital. It has a reputation of a good and rather democratic café. It also attracts lots of Brussels citizens by different events. Concerts and exhibitions are held there. Yesterday guests came to Grand Prix Bar to watch plays by Minsk "Free Theatre" "Being Harold Pinter" and "Generation Jeans", Radio Svaboda informs.

Words "I am free!" form a keynote message of the "Generation Jeans". The author of the play, Nikolai Khalezin, has dedicated his play to all who, independent of their age, wear jeans, prefer rock-music and adore freedom.

The play "Being Harold Pinter" also tells about freedom, and about the choice of a creator, about truth in life and art. Parts of works of a well-known British playwright Pinter, his Nobel prize speech and letters of Belarusian political prisoners are included into the play.

During the performance, a big screen was installed near the stage to show subtitles in English. According to Olga Stuzhinskaya, head of Brussels-based Office for a Democratic Belarus, who is the organizer of the event, there were enough viewers, both local and Belarusian natives living in Belgium.

"All sorts of people were present. All of them are interested in the situation in Belarus. On our part, we want to show Brussels our talented actors, artists, photographers, to tell by the means of culture about the events in Minsk last spring," Olga Stuzhinskaya said.

The performance of Minsk artists laid foundation of a series of events dedicated to the anniversary of March events in Minsk. This weekend citizens of Brussels would be able to watch the film by Yury Khashchavatski "The Square", and to listen to a concert given by a Slovak singer Petra Jordan, who dedicated her songs to the Belarusian struggle for freedom and democracy.

Source: charter97.org

March 16, 2007

budget adjustments will be enquired. Storchak said Russia rarely provided loans to finance budget deficits, but Belarus has already received loans of the kind twice.

Belarus has developed a large-scale program of foreign borrowings to recover from the energy price shocks. The government is negotiating loans not only with Russia, but also with some foreign investors.

Source: Prime-Tass

EU Renews Belarus Sanctions Ahead of Minsk Opposition Rally

EU states have formally extended diplomatic sanctions against Belarus for one year ending 10 April 2008, forbidding 35 Belarus officials - including president Lukashenko - to enter the EU. The move, initially agreed three weeks ago, was rubber-stamped by EU farm ministers in Brussels on Monday (19 March), despite Minsk's recent drive to improve relations with Brussels as its old alliance with Moscow continues to unravel.



The sanctions extension comes after Minsk last week first arrested and then quickly released two high-profile opposition activists - Vintsuk Vyachorka and Vyachaslau Siuchyuk.

Other activists - such as presidential candidate Aleksander Kozulin - remain in jail however, while Mr Vyachorka and Mr Siuchyuk will face trial on 23 March in a process that could still see them behind bars during a planned 25 March opposition rally in Minsk.

"This [the quick release of Mr Vyachorka and Mr Siuchyuk] is a good sign...but you could hardly call it a big step, as it is just going back to the same situation we had before," NGO activist Olga Stuzhinskaya said.

"If they released Kozulin that would be a real step. But unfortunately there are no signals we can expect anything on that any time soon," she added.

The 25 March rally in central Minsk will commemorate last year's mass protests against Lukashenko, when thousands of people risked their lives to express anger at rigged presidential elections.

The Minsk event will see parallel activities in EU capitals such as Berlin, Warsaw and Brussels this week, such as performances in the EU capital by Belarusian underground artists' group Free Theatre.

In an ironic twist, EU27 leaders will the same day in Berlin celebrate the EU's 50th birthday, with part of the birthday declaration devoted to the "dark" topic of the Cold War, of which Belarus - often dubbed Europe's "last dictatorship" - remains a relic. In the early morning hours of 19 March - the actual date of last year's presidential elections - Belarusian opposition supporters in 60 European cities and 30 countries worldwide gagged statues and hung banners saying "Give a voice to the citizens of Belarus."

Source: euobserver.com

March 20, 2007

Investors Are Leaving Belarus

Blaming increasingly strict regulations in tobacco imports to Belarus, tobacco company Phillip Morris is undertaking some structural transformations that might result in minimising business operations in Belarus.

Phillip Morris Management Service Company, present in Belarusian market for more than 10 years, says that the matter concerned is not about completely suspending all activities. However, the company's representative Igor Alkhimovich pointed out that the presence of the well-known brand will be dependent on the scope of business operations in the country. "The details mentioned earlier do not imply us folding up business in Belarus. Reducing the scope of business activity is a possibility though. We are not talking about leaving the market altogether. Neither of the official releases implies that."

The official release reads that one of the reasons why the representative office is being transformed now is significant restrictions on importing tobacco cigarettes into the country. Thus, AF&Company, importer for Phillip Morris Management Service, was not given a customs quota for 2007.

"Our market share in the country must correspond to the volume of our business activities. Our AF&Company importer has not received the quota on

import of cigarettes in 2007. For this reason we make the necessary restructuring of the company in compliance with the current situation at the Belarusian tobacco market", manager on incorporation of the representative office in Belarus Igor Alkhimovich said in his comments to Prime-Tass news agency.

At the same time, the release also says that Belarusian and Russian governments are negotiating now about removing trade barriers for tobacco products imported from Russia. "We hope that the negotiations will result in removing customs quotas, and other similar restrictions."

Referring to anonymous sources, some news agencies say that one of the reasons for structural transformations was a disagreement with the Neman tobacco factory in Grodno, probably because negotiations to produce licensed Phillip Morris cigarettes there did not bring any result. However, Igor Alkhimovich does not confirm the 'Grodno version'. In their turn, the Neman tobacco factory in Grodno reckons that Phillip Morris is not interested in producing licensed cigarettes here anyway.

Source: Radio Liberty

March, 14 2007

Announcements

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. The German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Slovak delegation in the EPP-ED group in the European Parliament provided significant support to the project and made it possible for the program to take place.

The **March 24** soiree will begin with presentation of the **movie Ploshcha** (Square), a work by the famous filmmaker Yuri 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.

Date: 24/03/2007 Time: 19:00 Grand Prix Bar Parc du Cinquantenaire, 11 (Nouveau Museum) 4000 Brussels Location: http://www.cinquantenaire.be Contact: Office for a Democratic Belarus +32 2 401 64 41 www.democraticbelarus.eu MINSK, KALINOUSKI SQ, MARCH 2006 	 OFFICE FOR A DEMOCRATIC BELARUS Brussels	The event is organized under patronage of the Delegation on Relations with Belarus in the European Parliament.
	19:00 Screening of the movie Ploshcha (Square) 	
	21:00 Concert by Petra Jordan  www.petra-jordan.com	

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