



OFFICE FOR A
DEMOCRATIC BELARUS
BRUSSELS

Belarus Headlines

April 5 —
April 17



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April 18

Dear colleagues and friends,

A few days ago our web-site was hacked by unknown persons that is why it was inaccessible for 2 days. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience.

Office for a Democratic Belarus

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Dear friends and colleagues,

The Office for a Democratic Belarus and the Hanse-Office in Brussels would like to invite you to the Chernobyl information evening and documentary film screening to take place on Friday, 27th of April, at 19.00.

Hanse-Office

- Joint Representation of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and the State of Schleswig-Holstein to the EU

Avenue Palmerston 20

B-1000 Brussels.

Even today, 21 years after the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the problem of its consequences is as acute, as ever. 485 villages and towns were lost, 136 000 people were forced to flee from the contaminated area, with 2 000 000 still living there. Belarus received 70% of all radioactive fallout. Nevertheless, the present Belarusian regime prefers not to talk about the problem and discourages any scientific research on Chernobyl consequences.

Programme of the evening:

- brief discussion about the Chernobyl catastrophe and its present political context in Belarus;
- photo report from the Chernobyl march in Minsk on April 26, 2007 (slideshow);

Adamovich)

documentary films “Once Upon a Time” (2006, 10 min) and “As Is Their Wont” (2006, 20 min)
(director Galina Galina Adamovich)

Entrance is free, drinks and snacks provided.

R.S.V.P. not later than April 25:

alyona@democraticbelarus.eu

or by telephone T: + 32 2 401 61 41 (42).

We are looking forward to seeing you!



Economics

Belarusian-Latvian Business Talks in Minsk Yield Tentative Trade Deals

Wednesday's business matchmaking session involving Belarusian and Latvian companies yielded several tentative agreements on trade deals.

Held in Minsk, the event was attended by executives with 63 Belarusian and 12 Latvian businesses.

In particular, a Belarusian wholesaler agreed to buy fresh frozen fish from two Latvian suppliers. Belprod-fud and Beltransinvest plan to sign contracts on the purchase of Latvian-made canned fish and medicines, while Alvo is expected to contract to supply furniture components to the Latvian country.

Girts Kronbergs, a representative of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, noted that Latvian businesses were increasingly interested in expanding to the Belarusian market and vice versa.

Two Latvian companies represented at the talks, Lauks and Duna, have been already selling their goods to Belarusian customers, he said.

Joint Belarusian-Latvian projects are run by the Belarusian Steel Works and the Liepajas Metalurgs steel company, the Minsk-based Milavitsa lingerie maker and Lauma, and other companies. A joint enterprise has operated in the Liepaja seaport since 2003.

The Latvian executives are scheduled to hold talks at the Belarusian State Material Resources Concern in Minsk on Thursday.

05/04/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Talks about Russian Stabilization Loan Continue, Belarusian Finance Ministry Says

Photo: Mikalai Korbut, minister of finances



Talks about a stabilization loan that the Belarusian government has requested Russia are continuing, the press office of the finance ministry told. The press office said that "sides concerned" held meeting and exchanged letters.

It declined to comment further, saying that details of talks on the issuance of such big loans normally were not disclosed. "Routine work is being done now. We will inform you when an agreement is signed," it said.

On February 22, the Belarusian government asked Moscow for a \$1.5-billion stabilization loan, citing the need to plug holes in the budget caused by a hike in energy prices.

The finance ministry's press office also refused to comment on a Thursday report by the Russian Prime-Tass news agency that Russia had asked Belarus to look for more convincing grounds for obtaining a loan. The news agency quoted a source close to the Russian government as saying that Minsk cited the need to survive higher energy prices and subsidize domestic refineries whose profitability had dropped. The news agency said that subsidies to exporters contradicted rules of the World Trade Organization that Russia was about to join. It said that the Belarusian finance ministry was expected to prepare more convincing grounds for securing the loan.

13/04/2007

Source: naviny.by

Pipeline around Belarus Proposed Again



The Ministry of Industry and Energy has again introduced a draft resolution on a second line of the Baltic Pipeline System, with a capacity of 80 million tons per year, to be built by Transneft. The project had been used by Russia as a means of pressuring Belarus, since it would allow Russia to transport oil without using the Friendship pipeline, which passes through Belarus and Poland. The discussion of the resolution will take place behind closed doors – a good indication that a decision

has already been in favour of the resolution.

The new line will span Unecha-Velikie Luki-Primorsk. It would increase the capacity of the port at Primorsk to 150 million tins per year and allow Russia fully to bypass Belarus and Poland with its exports to the EU. The Industry and Energy Ministry commented that implementing the project will "encourage the growth of Russia's export potential and allow it to reduce transit risks," but declined to mention specific details of the proposed line.

On January 1, 2007, a Russian duty of \$180 per ton on oil exported to Belarus went into effect. In response, Belarus imposed a \$45 per ton transit fee on oil pumped through the Friendship line. Transneft proposed the first version of the resolution on a new branch of the Baltic Pipeline System on January 3. Belarus withdrew the transit fee on January 10, after a telephone con-

Economics

Pipeline around Belarus Proposed Again ...

versation between Russian president Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. On January 12, the Russian duty was reduced to \$53 per ton, and the resolution on a new Baltic Pipeline branch was returned "for development" in February.

Transneft vice president Sergey Grigoryev told that it would take a year and a half to bring the new pipeline online. He would not speculate on when the government would make a final decision on it. Industry experts estimate that the new branch would cost \$2-2.5 billion.

12/04/2007

Source: Kommersant

Belshina Plans to Set up Network of Trading Houses Abroad in 2007

Belshina, a major Belarus tyre manufacturer, plans to open a network of its trading houses outside Belarus.

At the moment Belshina is completing the creation of its trade organisations in Smolensk, Petrozavodsk, Nizhniy Novgorod, Krasnodar (Russia) and in Vilnius (Lithuania), the company told.

The new trading houses will allow Belshina to freshen up and enlarge its offering range in foreign markets and bring its products closer to customers thus boosting sales. In Q2, 2007 Belshina plans to open trading houses in Tiumen, Irkutsk, Kursk (Russia),

in Ust-Kamenogorsk and Almaty (Kazakhstan), Donetsk (Ukraine). Moreover, Belshina trading houses will appear this year in Botswana, Guinea, Indonesia.

Belshina is one of the biggest tyre manufacturers in Europe. It produces nearly 200 standard sizes of tyres for passenger cars, heavy-duty trucks, road construction machinery, buses, tractors and agricultural equipment.

In January-February 2007, the company increased the output by 42.3% from the same period last year. The sales soared by 45%. Belshina exports about 60% of its products to more than 40 locations worldwide.

14/04/2007

Source: BELTA

India, Belarus Sign Six Agreements



India-Belarus business cooperation received a fresh impetus Monday with the signing of six B2B (Bilateral Business) agreements in various sectors such as heavy mining equipment, machine tools and steel sector.

The agreements were signed here in the presence of India's Minister of State for Industry, Dr. Ashwani Kumar and the Belarus Minister of Industry, Anatoly M. Rusetsky at the Fourth Meeting of the India Belarus Joint Business Council organised by Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and

Oman Signs Two Economic Pacts with Belarus

Industry.

The Belarus and Indian companies that signed MoUs are: BeIAZ and Dhansar Engineering Co. Pvt. Ltd.; BelAZ and G S Atwal & Co.; BelAZ and Subron Construction; BelAZ and Power Tools & Appliances Co. Ltd; Belstankoinstruments and Power Tools & Appliances Co. Ltd; and Belarus Metallurgical Works (BMZ) and Adair Dutt & Company (I) Pvt. Ltd

BelAZ is a world leader in manufacture of heavy mining equipment, while Belstankoinstruments and Belarus Metallurgical Works (BMZ) specialize in machine tools and steel making, respectively.

16/04/2007

Source: IRNA

The Omani National Economic Minister announced that Oman and Belarus have signed two major agreements for avoiding double taxation and boosting cooperation between the two countries' chambers of commerce and industry, Khaleej Times reported.

The minister indicated that the agreements, which were signed on the sidelines of the visit of Belarus's President to Oman, will further reinforce trade and economic ties between the two countries. He added that the two countries have pledged to create an encouraging investment environment for investors.

The minister also noted that the Sultanate has signed 26 similar pacts with several countries worldwide, as part of the country's efforts to post a significant increase in its overseas trade and joint investments.

17/04/2007

Source: MENAFN

Politics

Criminal Case against Malady Front Leaders Goes to Court

The criminal case against five members of an opposition youth group called Malady Front (Young Front) accused of running an unregistered organization has been referred to the Savetski district court in Minsk, Barys Haretski, one of the activists, told.

The Malady Front members have been informed about this by investigator Syarhey Hrachowski, according to Mr. Haretski. "The court should either set the hearing's date or send the case back for an additional investigation within 15 days," he added.

The activist stressed that the prosecuted Malady Front members were set to continue their work. "We will greet Belarus' prominent people on Easter today," he said, adding that Malady Front leaders planned

to apply to the justice ministry for the group's registration this week.

"On the whole, we are working as usual," he said.

Reports about a possible criminal case against Malady Front leaders started circulating when Dzmitry Fedaruk and Aleh Korban were apprehended together with 25 other youths during a raid by officers of the Special Task Police Regiment on a private apartment in Minsk on February 4. The 25 people were soon released and the 22-year-old Korban and the 18-year-old Fedaruk were put in the KGB detention center. They were released three days later on their pledge to appear on summons.

As a result of a KGB investigation,

Messrs. Fedaruk and Korban, as well as Mr. Haretski, Anastasiya Palazhanka and Alyaksey Yanushewski were charged with acting on behalf of an unregistered organization under Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code, which carries a fine, a jail term of up to six months or a prison sentence of up to two years.

On November 1, 2006, Malady Front activist Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced to 18 months in a minimum-security correctional institution on the same charge.

09/04/2007

Source: **BelaPAN**

Milinkevich Visiting St.Petersburg



Former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich was expected to visit St.Petersburg on Friday to meet with local liberal politicians and journalists.

In particular, Mr. Milinkevich planned to brief Russian reporters about the stance of the Belarusian opposition on relations with Russia "under the circumstances of the regime's crisis in Belarus and a transition to the democratic system of state governance," the politician's press office said.

The leader of the Political Council of Belarus' united opposition forces planned to offer his view of the current state of Belarusian-Russian

relations, as well as outline his vision of prospects for economic cooperation between the two countries, in particular oil and gas supplies, and the possible involvement of Russian investors in the privatization of Belarusian companies. Mr. Milinkevich also was expected to raise the subjects of Belarusian-Russian integration, cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Eurasian Economic Community, bilateral military ties, the presence of Russian military installations on Belarus' territory, and a joint air defense system. The Belarusian politician was scheduled to meet with reporters of the Rosbalt news agency.

The visit had been organized by Russia's political organizations and the Belarusian community in St.Petersburg.

13/04/2007

Source: **Milinkevich.org**

Second Congress of Pro-democratic Forces to Be Held in May

A decision to this effect was made at a meeting held the opposition coalition's leaders in Vilnius on April 11 and 12, Anatol Lyabedzka, leader of the United Civic Party (UCP), told.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Lyabedzka; former presidential candidate Alyaksandr Milinkevich; Vintsuk Vyachorka, chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front; and Syarhey Kalyakin, leader of the Belarusian Party of Communists, had held talks about the matter.

Messrs. Vyachorka and Kalyakin suggested holding the Congress, whereas Mr. Milinkevich spoke against this. However, they ultimately reached a consensus that the Congress should be held in May.

It was decided that delegates to the Congress should be those whose status would be confirmed by a special commission, as well as some delegates to the previous Congress.

Politics

Second Congress of Pro-democratic Forces to Be Held in May

Parties and associations that do not participate in the country's political life, as well as non-governmental organizations, would not be allowed to be represented at the Congress.

Mr. Lyabedzka said that provincial opposition leaders would soon hold conferences to vote on the agenda of the Congress and on whether the issue of a single opposition leader should be placed on it.

"The results of this voting will be summed up and the decision of the provinces will be binding for the opposition elite in Minsk," said Mr. Lyabedzka. "We also suggest that provincial leaders should nominate seven more delegates to the Congress, including representatives of non-governmental organizations or prominent persons in their regions." If the conferences are held soon, the

issue of the Congress' date will be technical, not political, the UCP leader said.

13/04/2007

Source: **BelaPAN**

Lukashenko Tells His Future



Lukashenko revealed his political future at a press conference yesterday. He does not want to be president of Russia (or the Union State), he claimed, but he expects to rule his own country for a long time to come. In his appearance before the chief editors of the Belarusian press, he continued the theme he spoke on at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Minsk on Easter Day, that is, friendship with Russia.

"I want them to know in Russia that the Belarusian people never was and never will be a traitor," he said, adding, "We will never let the tanks through to Moscow."

Two months ago, Lukashenko declared that Minsk's political orientation toward Moscow had been a mistake and that he would cooperate "with the demon and the devil in the West" to guarantee his country's energy supply.

he would cooperate "with the demon and the devil in the West" to guarantee his country's energy supply. He was not warmly received into the embrace of the West, however. Nonetheless, after chiding Gazprom for monopolizing the natural gas market yesterday, Lukashenko stated that the Belarusian economy is "55 percent oriented toward the European Union" and drawing the country toward "normal relations" with Western countries. He was not warmly received into the embrace of the West, however. Nonetheless, after chiding Gazprom for monopolizing the natural gas market yesterday, Lukashenko stated that the Belarusian economy is "55 percent oriented toward the European Union" and drawing the country toward "normal relations" with Western countries.

Lukashenko denied that he intended his son Viktor, who is his advisor and a member of the country's Security Council, to succeed him. He added that his second son will not succeed him either, but he is preparing his third son, when he grows up. It can be assumed from his words that Lukashenko has a small third son.

13/04/2007

Belarusian Television Manager Denies Milinkevich Live Debate on Chernobyl Aftermath

Alyaksandr Milinkevich has asked the Belarusian State Television and Radio Company (BSTRC) to arrange a live TV debate on the aftermath of Chernobyl and invite him, experts and Chernobyl cleanup workers to take part in it.

He suggested arranging the debate on Channel One (Belarusian Television) on April 25, the anniversary of the nuclear accident.

He sent the request to the head of the BSTRC, Alyaksandr Zimowski, on Thursday (April 5).

The former presidential candidate said that there were "serious grounds for assuming" that the authorities concealed many problems facing Chernobyl cleanup workers, people residing in Chernobyl-affected areas and other Belarusian citizens who he noted had to consume radioactively contaminated food because of the government's policy.

Mr. Zimowski said in his reply that he doubted the competence of Mr. Milinkevich and his experts, and pointed to this as the reason for rejecting the appeal. "Since I know you as a convinced and consistent adherent to the Western stance on events taking place in our country, I believe that you also share the West's views on humanitarian and other aid to Belarus that is provided for overcoming the Chernobyl aftermath," Mr. Zimowski said.

15/04/2007

Source: **BelaPAN, Milinkevich.org**

EU and Belarus

PACE President Raises Belarus Issue in Speech Opening Spring Session



The president of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) stressed that "European unity will also remain incomplete for as long as Belarus remains outside our common European home."

While opening PACE's spring session in Strasbourg on Monday, René van der Linden said that he had "sincerely hoped that the Assembly's recent constructive approach, culminating in my visit to Minsk, would elicit a positive reaction from the Belarusian authorities."

"But we cannot ignore the arrest and detention of numerous opposition activists, seeking to exercise their right of peaceful demonstration on Freedom Day," he said, referring to demonstration staged by opposition forces in Minsk on March 25.

"Nevertheless, it is still my hope that we will soon be able to welcome in our midst a Belarus that has committed itself to democratic reform," the PACE president concluded.

16/04/2007

Source:
Naviny.by



Milinkevich Suggests Opening "European Information Centres on Human Rights, Democracy" at Belarusian Universities

Opposition politician Alyaksandr Milinkevich has suggested establishing what he calls "European information centers on human rights and democracy" at all Belarusian schools of higher learning.

The former presidential candidate discussed the matter at his Monday meetings with Terry Davis, secretary general of the Council of Europe, and René van der Linden, president of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), in Strasbourg, according to the politician's press office.

"Belarusian youths should have the opportunity to get first-hand knowledge about Europe and Europeans, human rights and democracy," Mr. Milinkevich was quoted

Named "Democracy, education and Europe in Belarus," the proposed project would envisage the establishment of such centers at all schools of higher learning in Belarus. Their operation would be coordinated by representatives of the Council of Europe or the European Union.

Mr. Milinkevich and a few other Belarusian opposition politicians attended a meeting of PACE's Subcommittee on Belarus on Tuesday.

17/04/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Statement of PACE Sub-Committee on Belarus

Strasbourg, 17.04.2007 – The Sub-Committee on Belarus of PACE believes that the strengthening of Belarusian democratic forces is a necessary and indispensable precondition for the democratisation of the country. An urgent step in this direction, therefore, is overcoming ideological differences to reach and preserve unity.

In this context, the sub-committee welcomes the outcome of the Vilnius meeting (11-12 April 2007), in particular the decision on the modalities for holding the Second Congress of Democratic Forces, in May 2007; the decision to ensure the broad involvement of regional structures in the preparation of the Congress and the conclusion of a "gentlemen's agreement" to abstain from partisan attitudes and statements prior to it.

The sub-committee urges Belarusian democratic forces to act in a forward-looking manner and start preparing the ground for the parliamentary elections to be held in 2008, with a view to maximising their support among the electorate, taking stock of the experience gained during the 2006 presidential contest. Belarusians should be aware that they have a democratic option and they should be free to choose it.

The sub-committee will endeavour to ensure that the issue of democratisation in Belarus is kept high on the Assembly's agenda and is given appropriate visibility.

17/07/2007

Source: coe.int