

Oil and gas dispute settled, projects with Poland, Chechen refugees – state press digest

Belarus establishes closer political and economic links with Asian countries hoping to boost exports. Lukashenka urges CSTO members to elaborate a new development strategy and attain recognition from global players.

The Belarusian Parliament ratifies the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Belarus emerges successful in the long-standing oil and gas dispute with Russia. The number of Chechen refugees trying to reach the EU via Brest is increasing.

This and more in the new edition of State Press Digest.

Politics

[Belarus sees Asian countries as important partners](#). Viačaslaŭ Jaraševič, head of the Finance Department at Minsk International University MITSO, wrote about the recent rapprochement between Belarus and Asian Countries in *Narodnaja Hazieta*. Over the last year, the Belarusian president visited many Asian countries including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, China, Turkey, Vietnam and others.

Viačaslaŭ Jaraševič argues that Lukashenka is establishing new links that will prove useful for the Belarusian trade sector in the future. He notes that many countries in Asia are beneficial partners for Belarus. The distance between Belarus and Asia does not create obstacles in trade relations as maritime transportation prices have been decreasing every year.

[Lukashenka urges CSTO to work on further progress.](#) On 14 October the President of Belarus delivered a speech at a session of the Collective Security Council in Yerevan. He raised the issue of the CSTO's image. Lukashenka asserted that NATO does not consider CSTO a full-fledged organisation, reports *Belarus Segodnya*.

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Lukashenka also urged the CSTO to work towards achieving the status of a recognised organisation. He encouraged representatives of CSTO member states to develop organisation at a higher level. He underlined the necessity of attracting experienced and qualified experts from different countries, including Russia, in order to improve and optimise the functioning of the CSTO.

[The Belarusian Parliament ratifies the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.](#) In October 2015 Belarus became a signatory member of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A year later, on 3 October, the Parliament ratified the Convention. In recent years, the Belarusian government has been adjusting its laws in accordance with the Convention, writes *Belarus Segodnya*. The document entering into force means that Belarus is ready to make a commitment to comply with all terms of the Convention.

However, non-governmental organisations point to the failure of Belarus to comply with one of the most important terms of the Convention – unmediated participation of people with disabilities in the development of policies that concern them. This fact hampers the progress of Belarus in the framework of the convention.

Economy

[Russia and Belarus resolve the issue of oil and gas supplies.](#)

An agreement on supplies of Russian oil and gas products through the territory of Belarus came into force on 12 October. The Belarusian and Russian Prime ministers, [Andrej Kabiakoŭ](#) and Dmitry Medvedev, have recently confirmed new terms of the agreement. According to the document, Belarus will pay the same price for Russian gas as last year.

However, due to the policy of inter-budgetary compensation, the final price for Belarus will decrease. In 2017 the price of Russian gas for Belarus will be about \$100 per thousand cubic metres, writes *Zviazda*. The oil and gas debate started in the middle of 2016 when Russia announced a double increase of tariffs for gas for Belarus.

[Hrodna region strengthens partnership with the border regions of Poland.](#)

Belarus and Poland are planning to establish a regular boat route on the Augustow Canal. In addition, Hrodna region and Poland have discussed implementing around 20 projects in the field of tourism and sports, writes *Hrodzienskaja Praŭda*. The parties plan to realise these projects in the framework of the "Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014-2020" programme.

One of these projects involves the purchase of a vessel which will purify and deepen the Augustow Canal. Representatives from the Belarusian side propose restoring two historic castles in Hrodna region. It is not clear yet which of these projects will be implemented, but the parties are now actively hammering out the details.

Society

[17-year-old attempts a massacre in one a Minsk shopping mall.](#)

A teenager began a chain saw massacre at the Europe Mall. He killed one woman and wounded several people. The suspect, according to *Belarus Segodnya*, suffered from a mental disorder. During interrogation, the teenager admitted that he had been planning the massacre for a long time.

He initially intended to commit the crime at the university where he studied. The suspect explained that he felt hatred towards all mankind, struggled with depression, and wanted to be killed during the arrest. It is also known that the suspect lived alone and was antisocial. Students and teachers of the university characterised him as distant.



[More refugees from Chechnya arrive in Belarus.](#) Refugees from Chechnya are attempting to reach Poland via Belarus, claiming that they want to escape the Putin and Kadyrov regime. From 2000 to 2016 the number of Chechen refugees hosted by Poland increased to almost 80,000. Poland received the largest number of asylum applications from residents of Chechnya in 2013.

A correspondent at the newspaper *Zarya* connects this fact to the adoption of a German law equating refugees' benefits with unemployment benefits. According to the law, the benefits amount to 2000 euros and are paid over the course of one and half years. In Poland, benefits come to only 1,000 zloty (€230) during the first year. For this reason, most refugees from Chechnya are trying to get to countries such as Germany, Austria, Denmark, and others.

The state press digest is based on review of state-controlled publications in Belarus. Freedom of the press in Belarus remains restricted and state media convey primarily the point of view of the Belarusian authorities. This review attempts to give the English-speaking audience a better understanding of how Belarusian state media shape public opinion in the country.