

# US investments, arrest of anti-Belarusian journalists, corruption – Belarus state press digest

Belarus aims to expand its cooperation with Malaysia and hosts another high-level visit from Poland. The Belarusian delegation visits the US to discuss economic cooperation and investment with state agencies and corporations.

The authorities arrest three Belarus-based journalists from the Russian media on charges of propagating extremism. The KGB discloses large-scale corruption schemes within the state procurement system.

This and more in the new edition of Belarusian state press digest.

## Foreign policy

Belarus expands its cooperation with Malaysia. *Zviazda* reports on Lukashenka's meeting with Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia Pandikaram Amines Mulia. The Belarusian leader stated that Belarus is interested in developing relations with Malaysia 'because it does not attach conditions to relations as some other countries do. Belarus will likewise refrain from putting forward any conditions'.

Lukashenka also stressed the need to increase trade between the two countries and develop inter-parliamentary political cooperation. During the meeting, the representatives of Belarus and Malaysia discussed possible cooperation in high-tech, industry, tourism, and education. Lukashenka also announced his intention to pay an official visit to Malaysia.



### Another high-level official visit from Poland.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka and Stanislaw Karczewski, the Marshal of the Polish Senate, conducted negotiations in Minsk. *The Minsk Times* reports that Karczewski emphasised that Belarus is a place of

stability and security in Eastern Europe, although some countries have previously overlooked it. The officials discussed the importance of shared history, and agreed that political interaction should follow the business interests of the countries.

Specifically, the parties agreed on the importance of trade intensification. The senator also visited the Council of the Republic, where the two sides signed an agreement on education. [Michail Miasnikovič](#), the Chairman of the Council, noted that the successful cooperation between the Belarusian and Polish parliaments this year will have a positive impact on the Belarusian parliament's contacts with other parliaments across the EU.

## Security

The authorities arrest three Russian media contributors based in Belarus for 'incitement of racial, ethnic, religious, or other social hatred or discord.' *Zviazda* reported that the three writers worked for the Russian publications REGNUM, LENTA.RU, and Eurasia Daily. The Investigative Committee analysed 500 materials and found elements of extremism in 120 of them, according to Belarusian Minister of Information [Lilija Ananič](#).

Ananič said that the publications question the sovereignty of

Belarus, and were insulting to the authorities, nation, history, language, and culture of Belarus. They repeatedly claimed that 'Belarus is moving to the West' and that 'the Belarusian government conducts anti-Russian policies'.

Belarusian authorities had earlier sent requests to explain the situation to the Russian Ministry of Communications and the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications. Russian officials replied that these publications 'are produced by marginalised authors and in no way represent the position of the Russian leadership, which consistently strives to deepen Russian-Belarusian cooperation'. The readers and authors of such articles are obviously trying to sow discord between Belarus and Russia, Ananič concluded.

[The State Security Committee \(KGB\) of Belarus uncovers a large-scale bribery scheme.](#) The company BelABM, which specialises in IT and business process automation, organised a corruption scheme involving government officials, reports *Belarus Segodnia*. The scheme was uncovered on 15 December when the CEO of BelABM Dzmitry Ronin gave a bribe of \$20,000 to the manager of the Social Protection Fund of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Liudmila Bačyla. In doing so, Ronin intended to secure his company's win of a state procurement tender.

On the same day, the KGB detained Alieh Vieramiejčyk, the chairman of the non-bank financial institution Single Settlement and Information Space. They also detained representatives of the National Bank Anatol Maroz and Kaciaryna Paŭloŭskaja on the same charges: corruption deals with BelABM in the area of state procurement.

## Economy

[A Belarusian delegation visits the United States to discuss investments and loans.](#) On 6-10 December a Belarusian economic

delegation visited Washington at the invitation of the Congress of the United States, writes *Zviazda*. The delegation included deputy head of the Presidential Administration [Mikalaj Snapkoŭ](#), head of the Ideology Department of the Presidential Administration [Usievalad Jančeŭski](#), and representatives of the National Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, and other ministries.

The Belarusian delegation held talks in a number of key US governmental agencies: the State Department, the Department of Commerce, the Office of the US Trade Representative, the Federal Communications Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The delegation held working meetings with the leadership of the Emerging Market Private Equity Association and the US corporations Microsoft, AGCO, Case New Holland, and others. The sides discussed investment



projects to be implemented in Belarus. The delegation also held talks with Deputy Managing Director of the IMF Mitsuhiro Furusawa concerning preparation of the IMF programme for Belarus.

**[Mahilioŭ introduces the first 2nd generation energy-efficient apartment complex in Belarus.](#)** As *Mahilioŭskija Viedamasci* notes, the building heats water with solar power as well as wastewater, while air can be heated with a special conditioning system. This allows savings of up to 40% for water and 60% for apartment heating.

The house was designed by Belarusians specialists with financial support from UNDP and the Global Ecological Fund. Funding from international organisations totalled \$1mn, or 15

per cent of construction costs. The apartment complex will soon house 160 large families.

## Other

[Belarus and Poland negotiate the development of the Augustow Canal](#). The first meeting of a joint working group of the authorities of Hrodna region in Belarus and Podlasie voivodeship of Poland took place in Bialystok, writes *Hrodzienskaja Praŭda*. The group discussed the development of Augustow Canal, which shares a border legacy with Belarus and Poland. They discussed simplifications of cross border movement of tourists and joint technical regulation of the canal's operations.

The group considered the possibility of allowing water vessels to move between the Polish town of Augustow via the canal and the Nioman river in Belarus. The sides agreed to jointly promote the tourist potential of the Augustow Canal and exchange information and provide media support to each other.

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.