

## Lukashenka Will Meet Yushchanka This Year

## Belarus at the Session of NATO Steering Committee

## Citizens Protest Nuclear Plant Construction

## Belarus-Polish Economic Workshop "Neighborly Relations"

## BCDP to Nominate Presidential Candidate

## US Embassy Hosts "Ambasovishcha" Festival

## Militiamen Get Salary of Two Chief Engineers

The official visit of the Lybian leader Muammar al-Gaddafi was an important event for his Belarusian counterpart Lukashenka, who still remains an undesirable interlocutor for the West. Lukashenka made sure the occasion was surrounded by the requisite diplomatic pomp, but the meeting didn't bring any sensational agreements between the Belarusian and Lybian leaders.



photo.bymedia.net

The relations between the two countries will still be mainly built on military and military-technical grounds: Lybian cadets will study in the Belarusian Military Academy and Belarusian specialists will upgrade Lybian Soviet-era arsenal. The question of credits for the Belarusian economy, which the rich Lybian leader could give, wasn't even touched upon.

Two very important meetings took place in Lukashenka's residence.

On October 30, at the meeting on inner and foreign policy Aliaksandar Lukashenka announced that the session of the Supreme Council of State which is due in the end of November will be a "special one". "We'll have to have the session in the end of November and it will be a special one," the Belarusian leader stressed. According to the President, the Council should deal with important issues. "As the head of the Council, I'll do my best to put really important and substantial issues in our relations on the agenda. Otherwise there's no sense in having the session," head of the state said. According to the President, "important issues which

## BLOG

Andrei Liakhovich, Miensk, Belarus

### Belarus – Russia: A Pause before a Conflict

Following Lukashenka's initiative, the Presidents of Russia and Belarus had a meeting in Moscow on October 25, 2008.

The session of the "Union State's Supreme State Council" got postponed from November 2-3 (as preliminary scheduled) to the end of the year. It was the only officially announced outcome of the meeting.

According to the official information, Lukashenka asked to have a pre-term meeting with Medvedev in Moscow in order to discuss during three hours in a row a number of abstract issues, connected with preparation of the postponed session to be held at the year end.

According to the official information, the parties didn't discuss a number of important issues of Belarus-Russian relations, which had been articulated in the statements, delivered by different officials on the eve of the meeting in Moscow. It was preliminary planned that they would be discussed and/or solved at the beginning of November 2008. The list of issues included:

- the price for the Russian natural gas in 2009;

- foundation of a common anti-aircraft defense system;
- amalgamation of monetary systems of Russia and Belarus;
- the admittance of independence of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia by Belarus.

Lukashenka is urging Russia to pay lavishly for the Belarusian role of “a shield” and “an outpost” in relations with the West and NATO as well as for its support in the international field. The Belarusian governmental authorities believe that these efforts are quite sufficient and that Russia shouldn't demand anything else.

In particular, it is expected that Russia should agree with the Belarus' right to settle the character of relations with the West on its own. Also, it is suggested that the Kremlin should take as a matter of course the situation, when the Belarusian authorities invite the Western investors and refuse to sell the controlling shares of Belarusian enterprises to the Russian companies. Moreover, the Kremlin should accept that due to the provided state policy a very small number of Belarusian citizens support the idea of “real” integration, as it is seen by Russia.

Presently, Russia can do nothing but state its categorical disagreement with the variant of Belarus-Russian integration development, as proposed by Lukashenka. The significance of Lukashenka's regime as an ally is increasing considerably in connection with the movement of Ukraine and Georgia toward NATO membership, installation of the US anti-missile system

objects in Poland and the Czech Republic as well as in connection with other negative events for Russia that take place close to its borders and in the global politics. It is hardly possible that in case Lukashenka rejects to obey Russia's demands, the latter terminates the gas supply to Belarus. Also, there is little chance that Russia will take some concrete steps in the nearest future in order to oblige the Belarusian government make some concessions.

At the same time, should Russia agree to develop relations with Belarus on Lukashenka's terms in 2009, it will mean nothing but a long pause before a conflict between Belarus and Russia that may result in quite a clear geo-political choice of Belarus.

The anti-NATO demonstration and the anti-NATO statements, delivered by Lukashenka in October 2008 as well as his personal request to have a meeting with the President of Russia before the scheduled term did not prove true in the context of Lukashenka's public statements that he was going to demonstrate a quick termination of his dialogue with the West and a new turn to Russia. Just on the contrary, Lukashenka had a desire to solve a range of important issues in relations with Russia, including the possibility of getting cheap natural gas, in order to have stronger positions in his dialogue with the West.

influence the relations between our states should be discussed”. “And there are lots of them,” Mr. Lukashenka added.

Lukashenka's words about the Belarusian economy and the world financial crisis got great response. The President thinks that, in some ways, Belarus could benefit from the world financial crisis. “We should use the present situation and make decided steps towards economy and society liberalization, debureaucratize the whole system. We should do maximum till January 1,” the President noted. In the debureaucratization Mr. Lukashenka is ready to go as far as to “implement application-based company registration”.

He also noted that now it is especially important “to do things we were always afraid of and never did”.

Mr. Lukashenka entrusted the government with the task of solving all economical problems caused by the world financial crisis. In particular, export routes will be adjusted and new markets will be found. All Belarusian plants and factories should continue to operate as usual.

Many analysts are skeptical about Lukashenka's attempts to liberalize the economy till January 1, just because the task can't be done so quickly. And analyst Uladzimir Tarasau thinks that Lukashenka's statements

were directed by an experienced PR-manager, such as the English lord Timothy Bell who is working to improve Belarus' image in the world.

The First Belarusian Investment Forum will take place in London in mid-November. The timing couldn't be worse. A year ago it was possible to place shares of Belarusian factories abroad at high prices, but now it's out of the question. Belarus has no surprises for foreign investors, and that's why it needs to make some extraordinary steps, such as the President's statements about the liberalization and debureaucratization. Whether these steps will be made or not, they will still be discussed at the Forum.

Expanding of guarantees offered to depositors was the main issue in the council on government's guarantees of individuals' bank deposits.

The President stated in his speech that Belarus has now found itself in a more advantageous situation than other countries in the face of the present global economic challenges. This situation relies on two factors.

First of all, the country's model of development positively influences the people's lives. Secondly, the people trust both the government and the banking system. Lukashenka explained that the need to adopt additional mechanisms of preserving people's deposits was prompted by the government's



care for the stability of the national currency and its intention to protect the interests of the people that keep money in banking institutions. According



to the Chairman of the Board of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus (NBRB) Piotr Prakapovich, the implementation of these documents turns a new page in development of the Belarusian bank system in the frame of the economy liberalization.

On January 1, 2009 the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus will raise authorized capital quota for banks. Minimal authorized capital for the Belarusian banks which plan to obtain individual persons' funds, open and keep their bank accounts will equal EUR 25 million. Now it is EUR 10 million. According to the Chairman of the Board of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, the decision is aimed to protect the peoples' deposits in the Belarusian banks. After the meeting, the President signed the decree on deposit and account protection in the Belarusian banks.

We should notice that the decree doesn't mention the businessmen deposits in the Belarusian banks. This

fact may cause new protests of thousands Belarusian businessmen.

As of today, there are 21 licensed banks in Belarus and only 7 don't have the authorized capital of EUR 25 million. The remaining banks will be given a year for accumulating funds. The decree also stipulates forming the Agency for guaranteed deposit refunds. Its initial capital will equal BLR 275 billion and will then be raised to the 5% of all deposits in Belarus. The Agency is seen as an effective means for deposits protection, which would make the Belarusian financial system more stable.

According to some resources, Standard & Poor's lowering Belarus



credit rating was an unpleasant surprise for the Belarusian government and top officials. The credit rating of Belarus was decreased from "stable" to "negative". "The changes in ratings show bad influence of the world economic and financial environment on the country's economy," the S&P's press-release states.

"Considerable deterioration of trade conditions against the background of lessening demand from key exporters of services would increase pressure on the current account balance while access to external financing is limited, accompanied by limited defense and low external liquidity," the rating agency report says.

According to S&P experts, in 2008 the deficit of current account would be about 3.6 billion dollars, or 7% of GDP. The agency forecasts decrease of export demand, including the demand from the key CIS partners. Trade conditions in the country are deteriorating because in 2009 the new stage of cutting Russian gas subsidies will start.

"Stable growth of the level of currency reserves, and at the same time measures taken for reinforcing external competitiveness and decreasing dependence of the Belarusian economy on import would be the conditions for reassigning the stable credit rating again. And on the contrary,

considerable growth of the current account deficit and deterioration of external liquidity could follow in rating's dropping," S&P added.

OFFICIALLY

## Lukashenka Will Meet Yushchanka This Year

*The meeting will take place this year, the Ukrainian ambassador Ihor Likhavy stated.*



According to Mr. Likhavy, "diplomatic representations do everything to make this meeting possible". The ambassador noted that the meeting is needed and preconditioned.

Official and unofficial information about the possible meeting of Mr. Lukashenka and Mr. Yushchanka had been appearing this summer but every time it had not been confirmed.

## POLITICS

## Belarus at the Session of NATO Steering Committee

*A session of the Political-Military Steering Committee on Partnership for Peace in the format 26+Belarus took place at the NATO HQ in Brussels.*

The session was supposed to discuss issues relating to ensuring the regional security.

Belarus was represented by representatives of the State Secretariat of the Security Council, the Defense Ministry, and the Foreign Ministry.

## SOCIETY

## Citizens Protest Nuclear Plant Construction

*Seven residents of Hrodna region led by a former geography teacher Mikalay Ulasevich formed an organizational center of civil initiative against the power plant construction in Astravets, western Belarus, "Radio Svaboda" informs.*

The campaigners have made a statement to the people of Belarus and

Belarusian government. It says that they do not support the plans of a nuclear power plant construction in the Narach-Vileyka natural reserve and recreational area because they think that this place may become another "Chernobyl hole" on the map of Europe.



The campaigners stress that the area was hit by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake in 1999, the strongest quake ever recorded in Belarus, which they say makes the construction of a nuclear facility there too risky.

They express certainty that "the construction of a nuclear power plant in post-Chernobyl Belarus is not just a mistake but a criminal design that would inevitably lead to another big and irreparable trouble going far beyond the national scale".

The group urged the Belarusian public who think about the future of Belarus to join the initiative and protest against the project together.

The initiative includes several WWII veterans and veterans of

work, a worker and a businessmen. A couple of days ago they submitted an application for pickets against the power plant construction in Astravets region.

## ECONOMY

## Belarus-Polish Economic Workshop "Neighborly Relations"

*The 12th Belarus-Polish economic workshop "Neighborly Relations" took place in Minsk on November 4-5. The task of the workshop was to discuss investments prospects for mutually beneficial economic relations.*

According to BelaPan news agency, the workshop hosted heads and executive officers of ministries and departments, enterprises and companies from Belarus and Poland. The participants discussed crucial economical issues and the ways to activate investment cooperation.

On November 4, top officials discussed strengthening of Belarus-Poland economical cooperation at a special meeting.

## OPPOSITION

## BCDP to Nominate Presidential Candidate

*The Belarusian Christian-Democratic Party has officially announced about nominating its candidate at the 2011 presidential elections. The decision was reached at the conference "Christian Democracy and Belarusian Movement" which took place on November 1. It was dedicated to the 81st anniversary of the party's foundation.*

The BCDP founders will have a meeting in March 2009. Nomination of presidential candidate or supporting the most influential democratic candidate, most likely Aliaksandar Milinkevich, is seen by the BCDP as one of its major goals.

## CULTURE

## US Embassy Hosts "Ambasovishcha" Festival

*US Embassy has announced the fifth annual "Ambasovishcha" festival on June 2009. This is an open-air concert of Belarusian rock and folk bands*

*at the Ambassador's residence in celebration of Belarusian music and freedom of expression.*

Those interested in participating should send their recordings and contact information to the embassy. There are no preferences as to music genres or language, the only condition is that the material should be original. The best band will be chosen by voting.

## TENDENCIES

### **Militiamen Get Salary of Two Chief Engineers**

*The wage rate was raised on November 1, and the Belarusian militia salary increased. Now even a beginner district militia officer gets the same salary as a candidate of sciences or a professor of the Belarusian State University.*

But despite a salary raise, there is a considerable 9% shortage of district militia officers. Any university graduate, a young historian, a philologist or a physicist may join the militia. The district militia officer's job is very stressful and demanding but still it doesn't require a candidate dissertation.

*Danila Stryzhak, "European Radio for Belarus"*



EUROPEAN RADIO FOR BELARUS



There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The site [belarus-live](http://belarus-live.eu) fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, Polish, Belarusian, Russian.