

THE BELARUSIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS

Mass Media Week. Presidential Elections 2010

Info-posting – October 4 – 10, 2010

The initiative groups were collecting signatures for their Presidential nominees in all Belarusian regions last week. The “HR Activists for Free Elections” civil campaign members noticed that the regional state-owned press mainly advocated the incumbent regime and criticized the opposition representatives. Also, there took place detentions of printed media print-runs with information about the potential ‘alternative’ candidates within the period under consideration.

The state-owned press, including the local “*Zhytsio Palessia*” newspaper, in **Mazyr district** (Homiel region) failed to publish the complete list of Mazyr District Voting Committee members within the terms, stipulated by the current Election legislation.

A mere word about the President’s opponents couldn’t be found in the state-owned media in the city of **Mahilou** as of **October 5, 2010**. “*Viesnik Mahilova*”, “*Mahilouskaya Prada*”, “*Dnieprovskaya Niedela*”, and “*Mahilouskiya Viedamasci*” focused on A. Lukashenka’s activities only.

The Web-site of “*Trybuna Pratsy*” state-owned district newspaper (**Babruysk**, Mahilou region) disregarded the main events, connected with the Presidential elections, in the region. The Web-editorial re-printed the reports, dedicated to the acting President. The materials were provided by the governmental BELTA News Agency.

The Web-site of “*Babruyskaye zhytsio*” newspaper, published by **Babruysk** City Executive Committee, has presented a publication under the title “The campaign has started. It is likely to be interesting” by Alaksandr Tsimafeyeu. He is widely known as an ardent critic of political opposition in the country. Firstly, the journalist praised the official authorities for their democratic attitude, since they registered 17 presidential nominees this time. Then, he attacked the opposition. Among other, he noted that Lukashenka’s opponents were “searching for the golden key abroad” on the eve of the coming Presidential elections.

The surname “Lukashenka” can be found in any article, dedicated to the Presidential elections, in the state-owned media of **Maladetchna** (Minsk region). All other nominees have been mentioned only once in connection with registration of their initiative groups.

The successful collection of signatures by Lukashenka’s initiative group was described in “*Vitsbichy*” newspaper (Vitsiebsk) on **October 7, 2010**. The surnames of other nominees as well as the updates about pickets in their support weren’t made at that. Among other, the newspaper correspondent hinted the exact location of the picket in support of A. Lukashenka in the article.

As reported **at the beginning of the week**, Tatsiana Kuchynskaya, a private entrepreneur from **Salihorsk** (Minsk region) and a youth civil activist Andrei Tychyna were fined 40 and 35 base amounts respectively for distribution of independent newspapers. They had been detained by the police at the city market on August 31,

2010. The activists were distributing the “My i Rynok” independent newspaper as well as “Gazeta Nyaklayeva” with the logo of ‘Tell the Truth’ civil campaign.

Alaksandr Zimouski, the Chief of Belarusian State TV and Radio Company stated on **September 5, 2010** that the state TV channels would be overloaded with politics during the coming months. Consequently, the serials and entertaining programs will be receded into the background. Also, he announced the TV debates. Most probably, they will be moderated by the state TV channel representative.

The road police officers detained a car with the print-run of “**Vitsiebskiy Kuryer**” newspaper, registered in Russia, in **Liozna** (Vitsiebsk region) on **October 8, 2010**. The newspaper was delivered from the printing house in Smolensk (Russia).

The policemen ordered Viktor Ramniou, Head of “Vitebskiy Korund” private enterprise that deals with the newspaper publishing, to follow them to the District Police Department. The police seized 11,000 copies of “**Vitsiebskiy Kuryer**” from Mr. Ramniou there. Also, Mr. Ramniou was officially accused of illegal distribution of the printed periodical edition.

The publishing house management believes that the wave of repression is connected with the recently started Presidential election campaign.