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INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL

UKRAINE-RUSSIA

Gazprom tells Ukraine how to reduce gas price

There are no grounds for revising the gas price under the current contract with Russia, the Lb.ua news and analysis website quoted Gazprom's deputy head **Aleksandr Medvedev** as saying during an annual meeting of the company's stakeholders on 29 June 2012. A price reduction can be achieved only on the basis of intergovernmental agreements, he added.

Medvedev stressed that "negotiations on revising the prices are not held with Gazprom".

In his turn, Gazprom's CEO **Aleksey Miller** said that his company gave European consumers gas discounts if there were joint large-scale projects with them, while Russia had no such projects with Ukraine.

Miller added that the company did not link a gas price decrease for Ukraine to Kiev's entry into the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Gazprom ready to take Ukraine to court

Gazprom might file a lawsuit against Ukraine if the country fails to purchase in 2012 the minimum amount of Russian gas stipulated by the gas contract, Gazprom's CEO **Aleksey Miller** said on 29 June 2012. He stressed that the annual contract gas volume had not been changed and that it was 52bn cu.m.

However, according to him, this problem might move to a legal domain only following the outcome of 2012.

In its turn, Ukraine voiced an intention to reduce the purchases of Russian gas from 52bn cu.m., as envisaged by the contract, to 27bn in 2012 due to a high gas price.

Furthermore, Miller said that Russia was concerned over a low speed of pumping gas in Ukraine's underground storage facilities. In his opinion, this poses a threat to gas transit to Europe or to deliveries to Ukrainian consumers.

On 27 June 2012, Ukrainian Energy and Coal Industry Minister **Yuriy Boyko** said that Ukraine and Russia had agreed on a bid for Russian natural gas purchases for 2013.

At the same time, when asked whether it envisaged Ukraine's purchase of 27bn cu.m. of gas, as was earlier reported, Boyko responded: "I think that we will buy even less."

The director of the Institute for Energy Research, **Dmytro Marunych**, believes that no breakthrough in the gas issue should be expected in the nearest future. In his opinion, the parties are continuing an exchange of media attacks.

Russian premier pays visit to Ukraine

On 27 June 2012, Russian Prime Minister **Dmitriy Medvedev** paid a working visit to Ukraine. During the visit, he met with Ukrainian President **Viktor Yanukovich** and took part in a meeting of the Ukrainian-Russian intergovernmental committee for trade and economic cooperation.

Prior to Medvedev's visit, the Interfax news agency quoted its own sources as saying that the Russian prime minister intended to draw attention to the problem of ensuring legal rights of Russian investors in Ukraine and that he would raise the issue of accelerating the ratification of the agreement on a free trade area with the Commonwealth of Independent States by Ukraine.

At the same time, Ukrainian Prime Minister **Mykola Azarov** stated that he would initiate a discussion on revising the gas contracts.

Later, Gazprom's CEO **Aleksey Miller** said that the issue of revising the gas contracts had not been discussed during the committee meeting.

A meeting of the Ukrainian-Russian intergovernmental commission with the participation of the heads of state is scheduled for 12 July 2012.

UKRAINE-EU

EU watchdog says democratic election in Ukraine possible event without ex-premier's participation

PACE co-rapporteurs for Ukraine, **Mailis Reps** and **Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin** said on 27 June 2012 that the parliamentary election in Ukraine should not be declared non-democratic if jailed opposition leaders are not be able to take part in it.

Nevertheless, PACE co-rapporteurs expressed their regret that the Ukrainian Criminal Code's clauses 364 and 365 that were applied to sue former Prime Minister **Yuliya Tymoshenko** and other opposition leaders have not been amended yet. The co-rapporteurs recalled that in its resolution of January 2012 PACE recommended Ukraine to change the aforementioned clauses.

Mailis Reps and Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin also said that they failed to establish whether reports on alleged beating of Tymoshenko while taking her to the hospital in April 2012 were true or not.

PACE chairman **Jean-Claude Mignon** said on 25 June 2012 he hoped that the court will declare the verdict to Tymoshenko on the "gas case" illegal.

Ukrainian MP **Oleh Nadosha** said PACE co-rapporteurs' statement demonstrates that Europe started treating the situation in Ukraine reasonably.

The Ukrainian political opposition for its part demands that President **Viktor Yanukovich** publicly explanation why PACE resolution on political processes in Ukraine was not implemented.

Germany to support Ukraine's European integration

Interfax news agency said on 27 June 2012 that Germany's ruling bloc of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) has said that they oppose the isolation of Ukraine.

"The isolation of Ukraine from Europe is an incorrect decision. Ukraine is a part of Europe and we should support it, so that it could follow the way it considers right," a member of Bundestag from the CDU/CSU bloc, **Karl-Georg Wellmann**, said.

The CDU/CSU bloc spokeswoman for human rights and humanitarian aid, **Erika Steinbach**, said earlier that Tymoshenko's trial did not meet the international standards for fair, transparent and independent legal proceedings. "Gross violations of human rights that were manifested in Tymoshenko's trial shall not be ignored," Steinbach said.

Polish president to discuss Ukraine's jailed opposition leader case ahead of Euro 2012 final

Polish President **Bronislaw Komorowski** visited Kiev to attend the Euro 2012 final match on 1 July 2012.

Before the match Komorowski met his Ukrainian counterpart **Viktor Yanukovich**.

Also, before going to the stadium, Komorowski received representatives of Ukrainian opposition in the Polish embassy in Kiev.

According to a statement by the Polish president press-service, one the situation with the jailed former prime minister, **Yuliya Tymoshenko**, is among the key subjects of Komorowski's recent discussions with Ukrainian politicians.

European parliament member calls for visa liberalization for Ukraine

The Interfax-Ukraine news agency said on 25 June 2012 that the head of the European Parliament's delegation for liaison with Ukraine, **Pawel Kowal**, called on the Council of Europe and the European Commission to take all necessary steps to simplify the visa regime with Ukraine "to send a strong signal to Ukrainians that despite political obstacles the EU is ready to actively support their aspirations".

UKRAINE-USA

US envoy to Ukraine meets prosecutor-general

The US ambassador to Ukraine, **John Tefft**, met Ukrainian Prosecutor-General **Viktor Pshonka** on 25 June 2012. Ukrainian media report that high-profile criminal cases, in particular assassination of Ukrainian MP **Yevhen Shcherban** in 1996, have been discussed at the meeting.

"The information collected during the pre-trial investigation allows the investigators to draw up certain conclusions, however it is only the court that shall dot all the i's, moreover the investigation into this case is not finished yet," Pshonka said to the diplomat.

Earlier, the first deputy prosecutor-general, **Renat Kuzmin**, said in a newspaper interview that the prosecutor's office has sufficient evidences to demonstrate ex-premier **Tymoshenko's** involvement in the assassination of Yevhen Shcherban.

President **Viktor Yanukovych** also said that Tymoshenko was involved in this murder.

US official says Ukraine to refrain from joining NATO

Ukrainian Foreign Minister **Kostyantyn Hryshchenko** after meeting former US Secretary of State **Henry Kissinger** on 27 June 2012 posted on his blog that Kissinger opposed Ukraine's joining NATO.

Kissinger reportedly said however, that Ukraine should become an EU member while maintaining good relations with Russia.

Earlier, on 25 June 2012, President **Viktor Yanukovych** had a meeting with Henry Kissinger.

DOMESTIC POLITICAL

AUTHORITIES

President calls for constitution amendments

On 28 June 2012, in his public address on the occasion of the Constitution Day, President **Viktor Yanukovych** said that certain changes should be introduced to the constitution.

"At present, it is impossible to ensure the principles that are guaranteed by the constitution without introducing changes to some of its provisions," he said.

Chairman of the constitutional assembly **Leonid Kravchuk** believes that a new constitution should have the rules of responsibility for failure to fulfill its provisions. In particular, it concerns such provisions as mandatory private voting in parliament. "The constitution should have it stipulated that in the event of a violation of this rule, a lawmaker bears responsibility or is deprived of the mandate, or something else," he said.

Kravchuk also said he received no suggestions from Yanukovych with regards to holding the next presidential election in parliament.

According to former Prime Minister **Yuliya Tymoshenko**, Yanukovych created the constitutional assembly and intends to amend the constitution in order to legitimize his dictatorship.

Former president calls abolition of constitutional reform illegal

On 28 June 2012, first President of Ukraine, head of the constitutional assembly **Leonid Kravchuk** said that the constitutional court broke the law in October 2010 by abolishing the political reform and bringing back the constitution of 1996.

“The constitutional court has no powers to adopt or return the constitution, or make any manipulations with it. Only parliament has the right to change the constitution,” he stressed.

According to Kravchuk, parliament, as advised by the president, may consider the question of bringing judges of the constitutional court to responsibility.

The constitutional court's decision to return to the constitution of 1996 resulted in changing the form of government in Ukraine, turning the country into a presidential-parliamentary republic, which greatly expanded the powers of President **Viktor Yanukovich**.

On 27 June 2012, leader of the Front for Change party **Arseniy Yatsenyuk** said that the united opposition initiated creation of two interim investigatory commissions in the Verkhovna Rada: one of them will deal with protection of the constitutional system while the other will investigate alleged oath-breaking by judges of the constitutional court.

Ukrainian court dismisses opposition's lawsuit against language law

On 28 June 2012, the Ukrainian Supreme Administrative Court dismissed a motion submitted by MPs of the Yuliya Tymoshenko Bloc (YTB) opposition parliamentary faction, who challenged the results of the Verkhovna Rada's vote on the language policy law.

The opposition claims that out of the 234 MPs who voted for the law, only 170 lawmakers were present in the parliamentary chamber during the voting process.

On 29 June 2012, YTB MP **Yuriy Odarchenko** said that his faction planned to file the same lawsuit with the European Court of Human Rights.

Furthermore, the opposition submitted to parliament several draft laws under which the enactment of the law on regional languages would not apply to Russian.

We shall remind you that on 5 June 2012, parliament passed the first reading of the draft law “On the foundations of language policy”. If the bill is adopted in the final reading, the Russian language will become regional and gain equal rights with the Ukrainian language in the regions populated by at least 10 percent of Russian native speakers, which is the case for thirteen out of 27 Ukraine's administrative and territorial units.

Ukrainian Prime Minister **Mykola Azarov** believes that the adoption of the language draft law is a reaction to the infringement of the Russian language by the previous Ukrainian government.

In the opinion of the Gorshenin Institute's expert **Volodymyr Zastava**, if the law proposed by the pro-presidential Party of Regions is adopted, it will only formalize the status quo in some eastern and especially southern regions where most of documents – both in business and in state sectors – are completed in Russian. You can read the full text of his commentary on page 16.

One third of laws passed in parliament in June never undergone legal analysis

In June 2012, one third of laws were passed the Ukrainian parliament without the required legal analysis, the Laboratory of Legal Initiatives reported on 27 June 2012.

Thus, out of the 37 laws passed in June, 11 – or 30 percent – were adopted in the first reading or, in other words, without the legal analysis which is carried out during a bill's preparation for the second reading by the Verkhovna Rada's main legal directorate. At the same time, the Main scientific and expert directorate of the Verkhovna Rada recommended to either substantially amend or even to reject some of the mentioned laws.

Pro-government politicians dominate Ukrainian TV air

The president of the Ukrainian Press Academy international charity foundation, **Valeriy Ivanov**, said on 27 June 2012 that the results of monitoring news bulletins on eight major Ukrainian TV channels demonstrate that 69 percent of all politicians mentioned in the news in June were representatives of the incumbent government, while 23 percent represented the opposition and 8 percent - other politicians (in April the balance was 48 35 and 17 percent accordingly, in February - 63, 29, 8 percent) .

In general, 74 percent of actualities (politicians' direct speech in TV news bulletins) are speeches of representatives of the government, 16 percent - representatives of the opposition, 10 percent - of other politicians (in April the balance was 67, 22 and 11 percent accordingly, in February- 65, 25, 10 percent).

The opposition Front for Change party said on 29 June 2012 **that** the Big Politics talk show hosted by Yevgeniy Kiselyov and broadcasted by the private Inter TV channel refused to allow the leader of the united opposition, **Arseniy Yatsenyuk**, to take part in the programme.

UEFA chairman praises Ukraine, Poland

UEFA chairman **Michel Platini** said on 30 June that Ukraine and Poland have perfectly organized the Euro 2012 football cup.

Platini said that the Euro 2012 football cup had a big impact on the host countries and became an important event for their social and economic development and for the international promotion of Ukraine and Poland.

Ukrainian deputy premier to challenge in court corruption allegations linked to Euro 2012 preparation

The Ukrainian deputy prime minister and minister of infrastructure, **Borys Kolesnikov**, said in an interview with the Echo Moskvy radio on 27 June 2012 that he would challenge in court the opposition and media's allegations in the government's corruptive acts while preparing for the Euro 2012 championship.

"We have all video recordings, all newspaper publications that were not supported by facts and can not be verified," Kolesnikov said.

Kolesnikov said that Ukraine's operational expenses at Euro 2012 can be estimated at 50m dollars.

Ukrainian president appoints new defence company head

On 26 June 2012, Ukrainian President **Viktor Yanukovich** issued a decree to appoint **Serhiy Hromov** as director-general of the state-run defence industry company Ukroboronprom.

The Kommentarii newspaper reported that Hromov had been working for a long time as a top manager of the Metinvest Holding company which belongs to the owner of SKM Group, MP of the pro-presidential Party of Regions **Rinat Akhmetov**.

In the opinion of a journalist of the Liga Business Inform portal, **Serhiy Vysotskyy**, Hromov's appointment refuted the rumors of a serious conflict arising between the Ukrainian head of state and the tycoon.

OPPOSITION

Court to resume hearing of ex-premier's case after medical examination

On 25 June 2012, a Kharkiv court held a sitting in the case against former Prime Minister **Yuliya Tymoshenko** and United Energy Systems of Ukraine company. At the end of the session, the judge decided to commission a medical examination of Tymoshenko in order to determine whether the former prime minister is fit for trial.

According to lawyer **Mykola Siryy**, by appointing a medical examination of Tymoshenko, the court directly violated her constitutional rights.

On 26 June 2012, a Kyiv court considered Tymoshenko's appeal against the "gas" case verdict and decided to postpone the hearing until 12 July 2012. The judge said that the court needed evidence regarding the state of health of the ex-premier, in particular, results of the medical examination.

Member of the European Parliament **Rebecca Harms** (the Greens, Germany) expressed concerns that the appeal to Tymoshenko's "gas" case is being delayed. "I believe they have held enough expert examinations of health and treatment of Yuliya Tymoshenko. And I'm afraid that the court is dragging out the process," she said.

According to another MEP **Michael Gahler** (People's Party, Germany), the court's decision to postpone the hearing of the appeal is aimed at stripping Tymoshenko of her right to participate in the parliamentary election.

On 28 June 2012, lawyer **Serhiy Vlasenko** said that Tymoshenko refused to undergo medical examination. Earlier Tymoshenko asked the court to hold a hearing without her.

On 28 June 2012, representatives of law firm Skadden (the United States) visited Tymoshenko at the hospital. As President **Viktor Yanukovych** stated earlier, Skadden was hired by the Ukrainian side for an independent assessment of the materials of the court proceedings in the case of the former prime minister.

German doctors call for house arrest for jailed ex-premier

On 25 June 2012, doctor of Berlin clinic Charite **Lutz Harms** in an interview with German information website Morgenpost Online said that the state of health of ex-Prime Minister **Yuliya Tymoshenko** is not satisfactory enough for her to attend court sessions. Harms recommended moving the opposition leader to Kyiv. "It would be even better to place her under house arrest," he said.

European court to review Lutsenko case in near future

On 3 July 2012, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will hold a public hearing of the case of ex-Interior Minister **Yuriy Lutsenko** vs Ukraine.

The ECHR reminds that Lutsenko's appeal was received on 21 January 2011.

The ex-minister said that his arrest and the decision on his detention were illegal and unwarranted, and he was not informed about the reasons behind his arrest.

Activists, candidates harassed by police, opposition says

On 25 June 2012, MP **Mykhaylo Volynets** of the Yuliya Tymoshenko Bloc said that law enforcement agencies in Donetsk are harassing public activists and parliamentary candidates from the united opposition. According to him, a parliamentary candidate representing the united opposition in one of Donetsk constituencies was summoned for questioning.

Volynets noted that the authorities also attempted to launch criminal proceedings against public activists in the city of Kharkiv.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ukrainian authorities preparing criminal case against website's editor-in-chief

On 27 June 2012, an investigator of a prosecutor's office came to the editorial office of the Lb.ua news and analysis website (Gorshenin Institute's project) in order to question the Lb.ua management and its editor-in-chief, **Sonya Koshkina (Kseniya Vasylenko)**. The questioning was part of a check "prompted" by a request from an MP of the pro-presidential Party of Regions, **Volodymyr Landik**.

In November 2011, Landik demanded that the prosecutor's office launch a

criminal case under Article 163 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code, which has to do with a violation of the secrecy of correspondence committed against state of public officials. The lawmaker was outraged by the photos which Lb.ua published on 18 November 2011, on the day when parliament adopted the election law. The pictures featured Landik who was exchanging text messages about the fate of his son, who at that point had been on trial for beating a young woman.

Later, talking on the phone with Koshkina, Landik personally confirmed that he had appealed to a prosecutor right after the publication of the photos in November. However, he could not explain why law enforcers became interested in the case only at this point.

In Koshkina's opinion, the fact that the prosecutor's office took the case eight months after Landik's request signals that he is only an excuse and "a formal reason to squeeze us and to crack down on the independent mass media before the election [in October]."

"It is important to clean up not only an electoral but also media field before the parliamentary election. [This is in order] to leave the smallest possible number of journalists who are capable of analytical thinking," she said.

Media lawyers and experts believe that from a legal standpoint, all Landik's accusations are groundless.

At the same time, citing her own sources, Koshkina said that after the check, a criminal case, charges and the selection of a preventative measure might follow. "It is not ruled out that it will be quite fast," she added.

Koshkina has fled Ukraine. During a political talk show broadcast live by the Ukrainian state-owned UT1 TV channel on 29 June 2012 she said that she was preparing an appeal addressed to Ukrainian President **Viktor Yanukovych** and Prosecutor-General **Viktor Pshonka**. She also voiced her intention to stay in Europe until an official refusal to launch a criminal case against her over Landik's photos is publicized. If this does not happen, Koshkina said she will be forced "to seek political asylum".

According to the information at Koshkina's disposal, the people who have allegedly ordered the case are "a high-ranking official from the presidential administration, his friend – who is one of the top government officials – and the third one, who directly implements it and is one of the odious deputies of the prosecutor-general".

The Lb.ua editor-in-chief is convinced that the officials who have allegedly ordered the case against her are not afraid of criticism from the West.

She added that the current situation was not the first attempt to "crash the publication". The law-enforcement agencies tried to seize servers of the portal back in December 2011.

"Lb.ua has never been a pro-opposition publication. Neither has it been pro-government. We have been and remain a mouthpiece of the civil society. In other words, we are independent and represent diverse opinions and mass media. Obviously, not everyone liked it," Koshkina concluded.

Human rights group urges Ukrainian president to facilitate independent investigation into torture

The Amnesty International human rights organization and the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union asked President **Viktor Yanukovych** to set up an independent system for investigating the cases of torture by police and by prison guards, the BBC Ukraine reported on 29 June 2012.

According to the information at the disposal of the Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, almost one million of citizens became victims of police violence in 2011.

The Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union's head, **Yevhen Zakharov**, said that torture by police was common and that this tendency was on the rise every year.

At the same time, a representative of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry, **Volodymyr Polishchuk**, told BBC Ukraine that the claims of human rights defenders were exaggerated.

Human rights groups ask Ukraine to lift "gay propaganda" ban

On 25 June 2012, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International asked Ukrainian parliamentary speaker **Volodymyr Lytvyn** to reject a draft law on homosexual propaganda proposed by the pro-presidential Party of Regions. The bill considers meetings held to deliberately circulate any positive information about homosexuality, calls for homosexuality in the mass media and similar events to be forms of gay propaganda among children.

The draft law further envisions administrative and criminal punishment for promoting homosexuality.

A sociological survey carried out by the Gorshenin Institute in October 2011 suggested that the majority of the Ukrainian population (78.1 percent) believes that same-sex sexual relations are unacceptable under any circumstances.

Human rights group accuses Ukraine of delivering weapons to South Sudan

On 28 June 2012, the Amnesty International human rights organization posted on its website a statement which claimed that weapons from Ukraine "were fuelling" a conflict in South Sudan. According to the information at the disposal of the human rights group, the tanks which are currently used by the South Sudanese army were illegally delivered to the country through Kenya with the participation of Ukrainian, German and British companies in 2007-09.

The Ukrainian analytical weekly Dzerkalo Tyzhnya quoted its source from the state-owned Ukrspetseksport arms export company as saying that Ukrainian officials had previously denied this information on multiple occasions.

ECONOMICS

Government official reveals tentative prices of Ukrainian farmland

During a roundtable discussion at the Gorshenin Institute on 27 June 2012, deputy chairman of the State Agency for Land Resources **Yevhen Berdnikov** said that the price of farming land at the launch of the land market in Ukraine will total 300-1,000 dollars per hectare.

In his opinion, the land sale ban will be gone as soon as Ukraine has a sufficient regulatory framework for the introduction of the land market.

At the same time an MP of the Communist Party of Ukraine, **Yevhen Tsarkov** supports the idea of introducing a government institution of land lease, through which the national budget may additionally receive up to 50bn dollars.

In his view, all land plots registered and distributed through the land cadaster should be transferred for management to a state land bank, which would lease them out.

Currently, sales of farming land in Ukraine are banned by a moratorium, which expires on 1 January 2013.

Ukraine, China agree to make payments in national currencies

The National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) and the People's Bank of China signed an agreement on 26 June 2012 in Beijing on exchanging national currencies. According to the currency swap deal, Ukraine's central bank buys 15bn yuans for a total of 2.37bn dollars. The contract is signed for a period of three years and may be extended by mutual agreement of the parties.

Currency swaps allow companies of both countries to use their national currencies and make direct payments without involvement of third-country currencies.

According to the State Statistics Committee, the trade turnover between Ukraine and China in January-April 2012 totaled 2.646bn dollars. Currently, China occupies the second position among 200 trading partners of Ukraine.

Central bank admits possible devaluation of hryvnya

On 27 June 2012, during an official visit to Beijing, head of the National Bank of Ukraine **Serhiy Arbuzov** said that devaluation of hryvnya may be inevitable at the end of the year in case of an acute shortage of foreign currency. However, the situation remains stable so far, he noted.

According to the official, the balance of payments in Ukraine remains in surplus, but it may turn negative at the end of the year. "If there is an acute shortage of foreign currency, it means that export stagnates or import increases. And then, devaluation of hryvnya will be inevitable irrespective of the NBU's will," the central bank head said in Beijing, assuring that "the reserves are still sufficient."

On 26 June 2012, Economics Minister **Petro Poroshenko** said that the Ukrainian hryvnya should be unpegged from the US dollar and tied to a currency basket.

Yemen demands arms contract refund from Ukraine

The Kommersant Ukraina business daily reported on 26 June 2012, referring to the Yemen Post newspaper, that **Tariq Saleh**, a nephew of former Yemeni President **Ali Abdullah Saleh**, paid a visit to Ukraine. According to the newspaper, Saleh arrived in Kyiv to negotiate a refund for a contract on supply of military equipment, including heavy weapons and tanks, signed with the state-owned concern Ukroboronprom in 2011. As the newspaper says, the Yemeni side did not receive the shipment from Ukraine due to “navigation problems”.

As Kommersant Ukraina learned from a source familiar with the shipment terms, Saleh's visit to Ukraine was unofficial because the contract might have been signed not with the Yemeni Defence Ministry, but through an intermediary company.

At the same time, as Ukroboronprom told the newspaper, Ukraine has no contracts for supply of military hardware to Yemen.

According to **Mykola Sunhurovskyy**, director of military programmes at the Razumkov Center, “representatives of the Yemeni side can appeal to international courts, but the parties are more likely to avoid disclosing details of the contract to the public, and should reach agreement through peaceful means.”

According to the Gorshenin Institute expert **Volodymyr Zastava**, with its decision to provide Russian with the status of a regional language in some regions of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada will only formalize the existing state of things in some eastern and especially southern regions, where most documents, both in business and in the state sectors, are run in Russian.

"Today, there is one state language in Ukraine: Ukrainian. Talks about a possible granting Russian the state language status are simply political speculations, as this requires amendments to the Ukrainian constitution, which must be backed by at least 300 lawmakers, which is impossible under the current situation.

Partly, the developments related to the language issue should be considered from the perspective of the Ukraine-EU-Russia relations. Half a year ago, experts of the Gorshenin Institute made an assumption that Ukraine's foreign policy is replaced with tactical manoeuvring between Moscow and Brussels. The tactics replaced the strategy. It is worth recalling that the issue of the Russian language status was raised by the MPs of the Party of Regions on the eve of the Ukrainian prime-minister's visit to Moscow. The Ukrainian delegation assured that the negotiations on changing the Russian gas price started, which was then denied by the Gazprom representatives. It is not a secret that Russian president Putin repeatedly spoke about the discrimination of Russian language in Ukraine.

Today, the language issue is not relevant for the majority of Ukrainian citizens. According to the opinion polls by most Ukrainian sociological services, the language issue is not part of the top 15 main challenges listed by Ukrainians. However, the artificial injection of this issue into the national agenda has its own electoral goals. The Ukrainian opposition yielded to the provocation by the authorities, spreading the hysteria about the Russian language status, and followed the agenda imposed on them. As the result, the voters of the southern and eastern Ukraine were again shown the image of the opposition politicians as "nationalists" who are not able to offer a solution to challenging issues, which include first of all the employment and growth of incomes.

The Ukrainian opposition also got certain political dividends from the language issue. The opposition continued "cementing" its electorate in the west of the country, losing at the same time voters in southern and eastern regions, which is not very positive, taking into account the fact, that in mathematical terms, the victory in Ukrainian elections belongs to the south and eastern regions", Zastava said.

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