

Belarus Puts Stake in MTS Unit Up for Sale

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Belarus is to sell its 51 percent stake in the joint venture it has with Mobile TeleSystems, a Belarussian deputy prime minister told the state news agency.

MTS, which holds the remaining 49 percent, had said it was interested in buying a controlling stake in the venture — the top mobile operator in

Belarus — but talks foundered on price.

"We are still interested in developing our business in Belarus and buying the government's stake in our joint venture, but at a reasonable price," MTS spokeswoman Yelena Kokhanovskaya said.

"If Belarus' government decided to put its own share for sale with an initial price of \$1 billion, we do not rule out we will simultaneously put our stake for sale at a comparable price," she

said.

Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko said last month that the country was ready to sell its stake in the local MTS unit for \$1 billion. MTS vice president Oleg Raspopov said Tuesday that talks were going on.

"These shares will go up for international tender. There was a proposal from the Russian company to buy a controlling stake. Negotiations were held, but we could not agree on price," Belarussian Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Kalinin was quoted by the BelTA news agency as saying.

The move is in line with Belarus' plans to sell off state property to help plug a trade deficit that has seriously depleted Central Bank reserves.

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