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Belarus Demands Compensation From Uralkali CEO Before Extradition

By The Moscow Times

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MINSK — Belarus is ready to hand over to Russia the CEO of fertilizer giant Uralkali if he compensates for damage done, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko said Monday, the same day that Russia issued an arrest warrant for the businessman.

The company's CEO, Vladislav Baumgertner, a Russian citizen, was detained in Minsk in August on suspicion of abuse of office, a month after Uralkali decided to dissolve its potash sales cartel with its Belarussian counterpart Belaruskali, sending potash prices spiraling down. Last month, the Belarussian president said the businessman could be extradited to Russia as long as his activities are duly investigated.

"A thief must sit in jail," Lukashenko said Monday. "Before greater damage is done, let him provide compensation."

Later Monday, a Moscow district court issued an arrest warrant for Baumgertner.

Lukashenko also suggested Monday that Mikhail Gutseriyev, chief of Russian oil firm RussNeft, could buy a stake in Uralkali and revive the abandoned sales cartel, Interfax reported.

Gutseriyev is developing a potash mine in Belarus.

"I would be keen for him to work," Lukashenko said, first and foremost because he has "his tail" stuck in the mine and is not going to go anywhere.

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