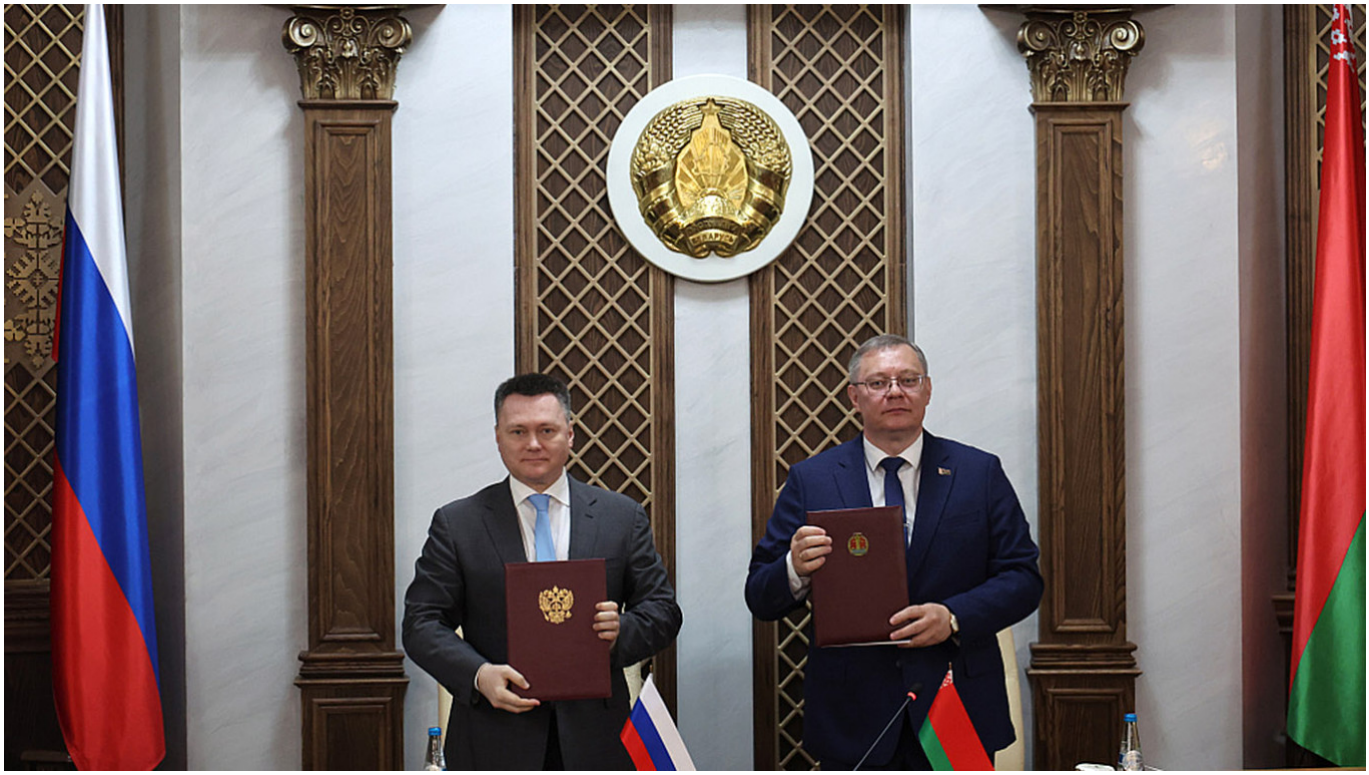
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Russian and Belarusian Supreme Courts Sign Deal to 'Harmonize' Judicial Practice

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Russia's Supreme Court Chief Justice Igor Krasnov (left) and Belarusian Supreme Court Chief Justice Andrei Shved (right). **vsrf.ru**

The supreme courts of Russia and Belarus have signed a memorandum of understanding that judicial officials said would help "harmonize" the court systems of both countries as part of broader reforms under their Union State agreement, state media reported Wednesday.

The memorandum, described as the first of its kind, is aimed at improving cooperation between the two legal systems on civil, criminal, economic, labor and family cases.

Russia's Supreme Court Chief Justice Igor Krasnov said the document "lays a solid foundation for harmonizing judicial practice," according to the state-run news agency TASS.

He framed the memorandum as part of the "drive toward unification and the goal of building a seamless legal space always emphasized by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian

President Alexander Lukashenko.”

The supreme courts also reached a separate agreement to mutually enforce court decisions, which took effect in late April, Krasnov added.

On Tuesday, Lukashenko met with Krasnov and Belarusian Supreme Court Chief Justice Andrei Shved.

“We have embarked on this serious, perhaps even profound, reform of the Supreme Court,” Lukashenko said during that meeting.

Russia and Belarus have formally pursued political integration since signing a Union State agreement in 1999, which envisions a shared currency, legal system and joint defense and foreign policy.

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