



**Europe's largest low cost airline, Ryanair to begin flights to and from Kyiv and Lviv later this year further cementing Ukrainian ties to European cities**



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**Ryanair signs an airport agreement with Boryspil on Friday March 23, clearing the way for flights later this year. The Dublin-based discount airline held a press conference at Terminal F, the terminal that opened in 2010 to serve discount airlines. The signing comes after a formula was negotiated to lower airport fees for all airlines and to encourage new flights. Referring to Ryanair's pullout last July, Infrastructure Minister Volodymyr Omelyan told UBJ.am: "There was tremendous resistance from inside the country. Not everybody was pleased to have the cheapest and biggest aviation company come to Ukraine." A travel website, fly4free, posts what they say is the list of new Ryanair routes from Kyiv Boryspil to: London Stansted, Stockholm Skavsta, Vilnius, Wroclaw, Barcelona, Warsaw Modlin, Gdansk, Krakow, Poznan and Bratislava. From Lviv, the website says, there will be flights to: London Stansted, Warsaw Modlin, Memmingen, Dusseldorf Weeze and Krakow.**

## Agriculture >

**Ukraine plans to start exporting wheat to China and Vietnam this year**, according to Volodymyr Lapa, chairman of the State Service on Food Safety and Consumer Protection. To date, Ukraine has supplied only corn, barley, and soybeans to China and Vietnam. In addition, a phytosanitary agreement with Indonesia is to be signed next month, liberalizing wheat exports to Southeast Asia's most populous nation.

**T.B. Fruit, a Lviv juice producer, increased organic juice production by 20% last year and exported about 3,000 tons of concentrate to the US and Europe.**

Located 30 km west of Lviv, the company markets its juices in Ukraine under the Galicia brand. "In the concentrated juice industry, we occupy about 60% of the Ukrainian market, 12% of the European market, and 8% of the global market," Oleg Mochaluk, T.B. Fruit production director, told reporters Thursday at the conference, Organic Ukraine 2018.

**The number of cows, pigs, sheep and goats decreased in Ukraine last year**, the State Statistics Service reports. As of March 1, Ukraine had 2 million cows, 4.5% fewer than one year ago. The number of pigs decreased by 7.7%, to 6 million. Sheep and goats decreased by 4% to 1.4 million. Ukraine's steady livestock shrinkage is linked to an aging and shrinking rural workforce in a country where bound by traditional, labor intensive animal husbandry techniques.

**Avangardco, Ukraine's largest egg producer, posted a \$7 million loss last year**, 55% less than in 2016. Traded on the London Stock Exchange, the company exports egg products to the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the CIS and the EU.

**Due to Ukraine's visa free regime with the EU, more and more blueberries will be left on the bushes next summer**, predicts the Ukrainian Fruit and Vegetable

Association. Last year, Ukraine exported \$66.5 million worth of 'soft' berries, with blueberries accounting for half of exports. But, the Association warns this volume will decrease: «The main reason is that the number of people who collect forest berries is declining because many leave for seasonal earnings in the EU, thanks to the visa-free regime.»

**Preparing for increased trade with Qatar,** President Poroshenko helped to open the Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition and visited display stands of Ukrainian agribusinesses. He said Ukraine can help Qatar, a nation of 2.6 inhabitants, achieve food security and to build stadiums and hotels for the World Cup 2022. Qatari and Ukrainian officials signed a bilateral agreement tripling visa-free stays to 90 days.

**Investment in food processing and more productive farming should push agro industry to account for as much as one quarter of the nation's GDP,** Prime Minister Groysman told participants Tuesday at the Sikorsky Challenge innovation hub at Kiev Polytechnic Institute. Although Ukraine has tripled grain exports since 2010, the farm economy accounts for about 17% percent of overall economic activity, he said.

**To boost Ukraine's wine industry,** reeling from the loss of Crimean vineyards, the Rada passed on Tuesday a law to simplify and streamline permitting procedures to open new wineries and to launch new wines on the market.

**Part of a larger fruit and vegetable export surge,** Ukraine exported 25% more tomato juice last year, than in 2016, according to the Ministry of Agrarian Policy. Ukraine exported 6,300 tons of tomato, earning \$2.5 million. Last year, fresh fruit and berry exports were up 37%.

## Automotive >

**Mitsubishi Motors' Ukraine affiliate is opening 'fast-charging' stations** in the

Mitsubishi dealership network - Kyiv, Dnipro and Kharkiv. The stations open on the eve of the Ukraine launch of the Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV, or parallel electric hybrid vehicle.

**With two bills before the Rada, Ukraine seeks to become a major electric vehicle maker** and to convert its massive lithium deposits into a major source of batteries for Europe's growing electric car fleet. For 10 years, imports of electric car components and bodies would be tax free. For 15 years, lithium miners and makers of batteries and electric cars would not pay taxes on profits. Buyers of electric cars would get income tax deductions, and 5% of all parking spaces would have car chargers.

**Predicting approval of his electric car bills,** Infrastructure Minister Volodymyr Omelyan wrote on his Facebook page Monday: «Two years of work and done! [Europe's] cheapest electric cars for Ukrainian citizens, the creation of new, modern production, thousands of new high-tech jobs, ecology and clean air, the abandonment of Russian oil products.»

## Aviation >

**Flown directly from Seattle to Boryspil, a new Boeing 737-800 joined UIA's fleet** last weekend. Within 10 days, a second new Boeing 737-800 is to come from the Boeing plant in Seattle, [avianews.com](http://avianews.com) reports. In total this year, Ukraine International Airlines is to receive four Boeing 737-800, four Boeing 777-200ER, and two Embraer 195 from Brazil.

**SkyUP, Ukraine's new discount airline, has placed a \$624 million order for five late generation Boeings of the MAX series.** SkyUP takes delivery of the five jets in 2023 and has an option to buy five more. Next month, SkyUP starts flights with six Boeings. The airline is owned by JoinUP, a tour operator owned by Tetyana and Yuri Alba.

## Banking & Finance >

**Hours after the Rada voted to approve Yakiv Smoliy as governor of Ukraine's central bank**, Smoliy told reporters Thursday afternoon that he would retain the independence and sobriety of the National Bank of Ukraine. «I can assure you that the course of reforms that the National Bank has taken will remain unchanged,” he said. “We will strictly adhere to our mandate to ensure price stability and financial stability in order to promote sustainable economic growth.” Referring to his 10 months as acting governor, he said: “«I want to emphasize that I am not a politician. I am a workaholic, a technocrat.”

**Ukrainian workers in Poland transferred home \$3.8 billion last year**, 1.5 times the level of 2016. Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Bartosz Cichocki tells UNIAN. Poland's National Bank forecasts about 250,000 additional Ukrainians will go to Poland to work this year.

**Ukraine should legalize crypto currency mining as an economic activity**, says Stepan Kubiv, Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He has ordered relevant agencies to prepare documents necessary to include mining in the state register of economic activities, Bitcoin.com reports. An Economic ministry press release quotes Kubiv saying: “By adding the crypto mining sector to the classifier, we will bring it out of the shadow economy and collect more budget revenues.”

**Stable inflation, an effective banking system and the resumption of lending** are the three key midterm goals of the National Bank of Ukraine, Yakiv Smoliy, the central bank's new governor, said in a statement Friday. Other priorities are: efficient regulation of the financial sector, free flow of capital, and financial inclusion. Smoliy said: «The NBU has a clear vision and a clear program: we will continue to devote our efforts to ensuring price and financial stability, and fostering the economic growth together with the financial sector.»

**Ukraine has confiscated almost \$4 million in Gazprom assets in Ukraine this month**, Justice Minister Pavel Petrenko tells Deutsche Welle. The move came after the Russian gas company refused on March 1 to comply with a Stockholm arbitration court ruling that it pay Naftogaz a net \$2.6 billion. Petrenko told the German news agency that he would seek enforcement of this court decision in other countries where «Kyiv-based agreements» exist.

**UkrGasBank, a state controlled bank, is loaning Tokmak Solar Energy \$23 million** to build a 50 MW solar power plant. With completion expected by the end of this year, the plant will be near Tokmak, a city midway between Zaporizhie city and the Sea of Azov.

**Ukrainian workers send home \$2 billion more each year** than was thought, the central bank reports after refining its methods of calculating remittance figures. The new totals are: \$9.3 billion in 2017, \$7.5 billion in 2016, and \$7 billion in 2015. This year's figure is also to top \$9 billion, Dmitry Sologub, deputy head of the National Bank of Ukraine, told reporters Wednesday.

**Ukrainians now flock to Poland to work, while shunning Russia**, the historical magnet, new central bank figures show. Last year, remittances from Poland totaled \$3.1 billion, a 57% jump over 2016. By contrast, remittances from Russia fell by 6% to \$1.3 billion, less than half the Polish level. Beyond Poland, remittances from other EU countries grew by 14% last year to \$2.6 billion. Remittances from U.S. and Canada increased by 17% to \$800 million. Last month, the central bank estimated that 2.2 million Ukrainians are working abroad -- 8 percent of the working population

**Capital investment in farming grew 31% in hryvnia last year**, more than twice as fast as the 13.7% inflation rate. In dollar terms, the \$2.2 billion in investments was

4% higher than 2013, the last pre-crisis year, according to the Institute of Agrarian Economics.

**Metinvest, Ukraine's largest private company, increased capital investments by 45% last year** over 2016, to compared to \$542 million. According to audited consolidated financial results for 2017, the metallurgical segment accounted for 51% of capital investments, and mining for 48%.

**Ferrexpo plc, which controls Poltava and Yeristovskiy iron ore mining** and processing enterprises, doubled its capital investments last year to \$103 million, from \$ 48 million in 2016. As reported in the company's annual report on the London Stock Exchange, the group has resumed its modernization program, which is to cost \$120 million and last through 2020.

## Business >

**Ukraine's exports to Austria rose by 48% last year**, President Poroshenko said Wednesday at a joint press conference with Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen in Kyiv. Overall, bilateral trade was up 18.5%, to \$1.2 billion. On Thursday, Austria's president met with businessmen in Lviv. Once part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Lviv has a new Austrian consulate general and direct 90-minute flights to Vienna on Austrian Airlines.

**Workers at ArcelorMittal Kriviy Rih, the nation's largest mining and metal complex**, rallied Thursday for a monthly wage of EUR 1,000, safer working conditions, and an end to "anti-union" policies. In recent days, several unions have threatened to go on strike. Workers have been emboldened by the visa free policy which allows Ukrainians to go to Poland for 90-day stints and earn up to four times their wages here.

**Ukraine's exports to Poland grew by 27% last year**, while Poland's exports to Ukraine grew by 24%. Poland has a big

trade surplus with Ukraine: 4.3 billion euros of Polish exports versus 2.1 billion euros of Ukrainian exports. Polish investments in the Ukrainian economy are still insufficient, due to the security situation Jerzy Kwiecinsky, Poland's Minister of Investment and Development, told the Europe-Ukraine forum last week, near Rzeszow, Poland.

**For Polish business**, a Ukraine trade and investment forum will be held May 10 in Warsaw and May 11 in Gdansk. The forum, Days of Ukrainian Business, is organized by the Association of Ukrainian Business in Poland. The aims are to increase trade, investment, and cross border travel.

**The scope of the new Export-Credit Agency would triple under a new bill**, to cover 45% of total exports of Ukrainian goods, Nataliya Mykolska, Ukraine's trade representative, tells Interfax. The agency is to start work toward the end of this year.

**Ukraine's exports continue their strong growth, rising by 23.5% in January**, compared to one year earlier, Prime Minister Groysman writes on his Facebook page. Reflecting Ukraine's turn west, the EU now is Ukraine's main trading partner, accounting for 46% of total exports of goods.

**Industrialists are asking the government to cut port duties by 54%**. Heads of several leading industrial groups argue that cutting port duties in half would add almost one percent growth to the economy. Starting in January, the government cut port duties by 20%.

**In a sign that organic food is gaining popularity**, Lantmannen Axa, the Ukraine subsidiary of Sweden's Lantmännen farmers cooperative, reports that its net profit increased almost seven fold last year, to hit \$760,000. Lantmannen Axa largely sells granola and muesli breakfast cereals.

**Kharkiv Tractor Plant, the largest agricultural machinery manufacturer in**

**Ukraine**, turned a \$25 million loss in 2016 into an \$8 million profit in 2017, according to information released prior to its annual shareholder meeting next month. Plant director A. Koval, says the plant will make at least 800 tractors in 2018, 300 for Ukraine and more than 500 for export. While this volume is about the same as 2017, owner Oleksandr Yaroslavsky has promised major investments through 2019.

**Lviv's Paper and Board Company saw its net profit increase last year by 47% to \$1.1 million**, according to figures prepared for its annual shareholders meeting next month. According to UkrPapir, the trade association, the company saw paper production rise by 34%, to 5,350 tons. Cardboard production rose by 10.5%, to 24,400 tons. Across the industry, Ukraine's production of cardboard was up last year by double digits.

**Foreigners who invest more than EUR 100,000 in Ukraine** will be eligible for long term visas, according to a decision last week by the Cabinet of Ministers.

**Ukraine's economy grew by 2.5% last year**, the State Statistics Service reports. This is better than the provisional estimate of 2.2%, and slightly better than the final growth rate for 2016 – 2.4%. In 2018, the IMF and the National Bank predict Ukraine's economy will grow by 3.2%. The World Bank forecast is 3.5%.

**Mohammad Zahoor is selling the Kyiv Post to Adnan Kivan, an Odesa businessman and native of Syria, for "much higher than \$3.5 million,"** Zahoor told the newspaper Tuesday night. In 2009, Zahoor, a native of Pakistan, bought the newspaper for \$1.1 million. Over the following decade, he says he invested about \$5 million in its operations. According to Forbes Ukraine, Kivan's construction company, Kadorr Group, is worth around \$1 billion, largely in Odesa apartment buildings. He also has a growing media group: Channel 7 TV in Odesa, a TV

studio in Kyiv, and a news site -- Ukrainian Information Service. The Kyiv Post sale is to close April 1. Two candidates have been interviewed for the job of chief editor.

### **Ukraine formally scrapped on Wednesday its 2011-2020 economic cooperation program between Ukraine and Russia.**

Signed in the Yanukovich era, the pact was increasingly irrelevant after Russia's trade sanctions against Ukraine. Prime Minister Groysman said Wednesday evening on TV channel Ukraine that he is "glad that Ukraine got rid of an artificial tie to the Russian economy." He added: "It was Russia that made absolutely unacceptable steps in military aggression, economic aggression, trade aggression against Ukraine. We were forced to reorient our economy to completely different markets."

**Nearly \$100 billion has been lost in Ukraine's economy since Russia's 2014 occupation of Crimea and aggression in the Donbas**, according to a new report by Anders Aslund, Swedish economist and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington. Titled "Kremlin Aggression in Russia: The Price Tag," the 20-page report notes that the Donbas was the source of 10% of Ukraine's GDP, and Crimea - 3.7%. On Crimea, he writes that the biggest monetary losses were 18 gas fields in the Black Sea, with a total value of \$ 40 billion.

**Ukraine has reached the trade levels seen before Russia's 2014 attacks on Ukraine**, according to Natalia Mykolska, Ukraine's chief trade negotiator. In three years, the EU has replaced Russia as Ukraine's top trading partner, accounting last year for 40.4% of trade. Bolstered by a new free trade pact, EU-Ukraine trade increased by 26.7% last year.

## **Commodities** >

**Potentially Canada's largest investment in Ukraine**, Black Iron Inc.'s Shymanivske iron ore project in Krivyi Rih is making progress in obtaining rights to three key

land parcels for the mine and plant. Noting that the Kryvy Rih City Council is "very supportive," a company press release from Toronto predicts that land rights will be acquired by the end of this year. This would allow construction to start next year on what could be a \$500 million project. The deposit contains an estimated 646 million tons of iron-bearing material.

**Natalia Mykolska, Ukraine's trade negotiator, has asked the Trump Administration** to exempt Ukrainian metal products from the new 25% steel import duty. The new duty starts Friday.

## Energy >

**The EBRD aims to help finance 10 to 20 bioenergy projects in Ukraine through 2021**, Sergey Maslichenko, regional associate director for Energy Efficiency and Climate Change, tells Interfax. After financing wind and solar projects, he said, "now we want to make a greater emphasis on bioenergy projects - biogas, biomass, and production of bioethanol." He said research shows Ukraine's potential bioenergy resources -- husks, straw, other agricultural wastes -- have the energy equivalent of 30 million tons of oil. Ukraine consumes 8 million tons of oil a year.

**Over 60 solar energy companies -- from Belarus, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Ukraine and the United States** -- have applied for land plots in the Chernobyl exclusion zone to build solar energy stations, Ostap Semerak, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, tells a Rada energy committee. On Monday, the Minister will outline a solar park feasibility study to be made by Tractebel Engineering, a French company considered a leader in renewable energy.

**Gazprom and Naftogaz have agreed to meet in the next two weeks to discuss their differences**, notably Gazprom's refusal to fulfill a Stockholm arbitration ruling that it pay \$2.6 billion to Naftogaz and Gazprom's attempt to end early its

2009 gas supply and transit contract with Ukraine. **Concorde Capital's Alexander Paraschiy writes:** "Naftogaz and Gazprom certainly have a lot to discuss... Gazprom will try to pay the [\$2.6 billion] bill with Ukrainian Eurobonds (\$3 billion outstanding)...which Ukraine does not intend to repay due to a moratorium imposed by parliament. To make such "payment" happen, Gazprom needs to wait for a ruling in the next few months from a U.K. appeals court, which will most likely conclude that Ukraine has to repay the \$3 billion in bonds. Therefore, it is important for Gazprom to buy some more time, which involves scheduling talks with Naftogaz like these."

**Gazprom owes Ukraine about \$ 8.5 billion for gas deals**, Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman says. His press service quotes him saying: "These funds will be paid in one way or another in favor of our state."

**39 U.S. Senators signed a letter to the Trump Administration** urging President Trump to use «all available means at his disposal» to prevent the construction of Nord Stream 2. Critics warn this gas bypass pipeline through the Baltic Sea would untie the Kremlin's hands for greater military action against Ukraine. There are 100 U.S. Senators.

**Norway's Scatec Solar plans to start building this summer a 25 MW solar station in Cherkasy**, the Dnipro River region 200 km south of Kyiv. According to a regional government press release, Governor Yuriy Tkachenko said the project is especially welcome as Cherkasy consumes almost twice as much power as it produces. Scatec plans to commission the plant in time to be eligible for the 19 cents/kWh 'green' tariff which is in place until the end of 2019.

**China's Jolywood Solar Technology Co. Ltd has created a partnership with Kyiv's Solar System LLC**, to sell and install 100 MW of Jolywood's high-efficiency N-type bifacial solar panels by 2020. Solar

Systems, an engineering company, has already supplied 13MW of solar equipment to Ukrainian solar parks. So far in 2018, it has signed agreements for 26MW of supply to ground-mounted parks.

**To build a 1.2 GW solar station in Chernobyl would require \$1 billion** and at least a decade of construction in eight, 150 MW phases. That is the picture that emerged Monday from a briefing by France's Tractebel Engineering and Ukrainian officials. The economic viability of such a massive project would depend on the future of the green tariff, a highly advantageous rate that might not be extended to solar projects commissioned after the end of next year. After conducting a feasibility study, Tractebel, a unit of ENGIE group, sounded lukewarm on the massive solar electric station, saying: «We understand that the north of the Kyiv region is not the best location for the SES, but it is this area that needs this project.»

**With Russian gas deliveries in doubt after 2020,** President Poroshenko said in Doha Tuesday that Qatar is prepared to sell gas to Ukraine, either through liquefied natural gas deliveries to a new Polish terminal on the Baltic, or through Turkey's Bosphorus strait to a Ukrainian Black Sea port. After meeting with the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Ukraine's president said: «We agreed that Qatar is ready to provide us with liquefied gas.»

**Gazprom will need Ukraine's gas transmission system for several years** after Nord Stream 2 is commissioned in 2020, Moscow's Kommersant newspaper calculates. On the German end of the Baltic pipe, local pipelines will only be able to handle 62% of the projected 55 billion cubic meter annual flow in 2020. At the same time, European gas demand may grow and Dutch production may drop. Due to these factors, Gazprom will have to ship some gas through Ukraine in the 2020s. The newspaper quotes Simon Pirani of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies saying

Gazprom «in practice will not be able to fully close the door for Ukrainian transit.»

## Infrastructure >

**Ukrzaliznytsia plans to purchase 350 to 500 new grain wagons this year,** according to Andriy Ryazantsev, finance director of the state railway. Much of transportation bottlenecks are caused by slow loading of grain, an issue at 63% of 518 grain loading stations. He told reporters at Ukrinform: "The figures show that Ukrzaliznytsia is working efficiently, even despite the growth of harvest volumes. Provocative statements that we destroyed or stopped exports are not justified.»

**With the government's road building budget doubling this year, to nearly \$2 billion,** Prime Minister Groysman wants a large-scale audit of the quality of roads constructed last year. This "urgent inspection plan" will lead to requiring contractor to pay for repairing shoddy work, he said at meeting of the Infrastructure Ministry and State Highway Agency. With the road construction season starting next month, major road works are expected at 218 sites across the nation.

**Kyiv City will spend about \$6.5 million** to redesign and re-landscape Podil's centerpiece Kontraktova Square. This does not include restoration of the 1809 Hostynnyi Dvir trade building, which recently was transferred to government ownership.

**Ukraine plans to spend \$2 billion a year over the next five years to connect all 24 regional capitals** with international standard roads and highways, Slavomir Nowak, head of Ukravtodor, said Wednesday at government briefing. By the end of 2022, 20,000 km of roads are to be repaired or rebuilt. Calculating that every \$1 invested in road development generates \$2.5 in GDP, he said the five-year program could add almost \$30 billion to the nation's GDP.

## Privatization >

**Days after President Poroshenko signed a new privatization law**, the State Property Fund posted on its website a bilingual English-Ukrainian catalogue of the top 21 state properties for sale. The list includes: Centrenergo, Odessa Portside Plant, Turboatom, Sumykhimprom, Agrarian Fund, and several regional power generating companies. The presentation contains a description of each company and information on their financial state. Privatizations of large state-owned companies will involve international advisers.

**Promoting Ukraine's privatization program**, President Poroshenko met in Doha with the executive director of the Qatar Investment Authority, a national wealth fund with \$335 billion of assets under management. The President and Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud Al Thani discussed prospects in agriculture, energy, tourism, modernization of sea ports and ship, aircraft and road construction. A bilateral investment protection treaty was signed.

## Science and IT >

**In Tel Aviv, the First Ukrainian-Israeli Innovation Forum took place Sunday**, drawing about 200 representatives of Ukrainian and Israeli IT companies, start-ups, venture capital investors, business incubators, and universities. Organized by the Israeli-Ukrainian Alliance, the forum had the goal of popularizing Ukrainian IT products and services and attracting Israeli investment to Ukraine's IT sector. At least 10 Israeli companies have major IT outsourcing operations in Ukraine. Russian is spoken by about 15% percent of Israel's population. There is two-way, visa free tourism, and Ukraine International Airways has direct flights to Tel Aviv from seven Ukrainian cities.

## Social >

**Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin suggests to Britain that Russian-speaking diplomats and British council managers expelled from Russia this week relocate to Kyiv.** In a tweet to British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, Klimkin says the 23 UK diplomats could reopen Britain's visa service here, which has largely moved to Warsaw. Also, he said, Ukraine would benefit from "an enlarged British Council." Worldwide, the British Council teaches English, gives university admission advice, and administers about five million UK examinations and English skill tests every year.

**Poland is the destination of choice for 62% of Ukrainian labor migrants**, according to a survey by the All-Ukrainian Association of International Employment Companies. Poland is favored because it is nearby, the salaries are high and the language barrier is low. The average stay is short – from one to six months. Three quarters of respondents had visited Poland more than once. Only 11% said they want to permanently settle in Poland.

## Telecommunications >

**Responding to opposition Rada member complaints, the Prosecutor General's Office is starting an investigation of the 4G mobile tenders** held in recent weeks. On the security front, Yuriy Lutsenko, the prosecutor general, is concerned the "that the tender conditions did not exclude the possibility of participation of legal entities with the participation of Russian capital from an aggressor country." In response to charges that the 4G band licenses were sold too cheaply, Dmitry Shimkiv, deputy head of the Presidential Administration, wrote on Facebook that the mobile operators paid \$309 million for 3G licenses in 2015 and \$293 million for 4G licenses this year.

## Travel >

**When Aloft Kiev hotel fully opens May 1**, it will be the largest international brand hotel in Kyiv, with 310 rooms, Levent Cengiz, the general manager, tells UBJ.am. Located between the city's two largest Class A office buildings – Gulliver and Parus – the Marriott brand hotel opened its first 205 rooms on Feb. 27.

**Kuwaiti officials agree to start a visa on arrival system this year for Ukrainians** flying into the oil-rich Persian Gulf nation, President Poroshenko's press service reports. On Monday, President Poroshenko completes a 2-day visit to Kuwait and flies to Qatar. There, the president is to help open the Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition. He also is to discuss expanding Qatar Airways service to Kharkiv and Lviv. Since August, Qatar has flown from Doha to Boryspil. Ukrainians receive 30-day visas on arrival at Doha.

**After ending flights in October 2014, Swiss International Airlines, or SWISS, returns to Boryspil on Monday**, restoring flights to Zurich. SWISS will fly four times a week from Kyiv to Zurich: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

**After a tentative return to Ukraine last summer, Swiss-based Viking Cruises returns to the Dnipro this year with 11 river cruises between Kyiv and Odesa**, from May 17 to Sept. 24. Priced at nearly \$4,000 per person, air fare from the U.S. included, the 11-day tours include stops in Kyiv, Kremenchuk, Dnipro, Zaporizhia, Kherson and Odesa. The first cruise is sold out. Viking's website beckons: "Cruise the

Dnieper River to the Black Sea, an ancient and splendid trade route lined with rich cultural treasures, onion-domed churches and rural folkways that recall the days of Vikings, Tatars and Cossacks. Visit Kyiv's Cave Monasteries. Marvel at the riding skill of Cossack horsemen. And trace the footsteps of history at Odesa's Potemkin Steps."

**Discount airline Yanair will branch out of its traditional Zhulyany hub this summer**, starting flights from Kharkiv and Lviv to Batumi, and from Odesa to Krakow.

**Kyiv tightens control over travel by Russians to Ukraine**, under a decree signed Wednesday by President Poroshenko. Russians now are to notify Ukrainian authorities in advance about their reason for traveling here. In January, Ukraine introduced biometric controls for Russians entering the country, but stopped short of imposing a visa regime. According to the Ukrainian state border service, Russians made 1.5 million trips to Ukraine last year.

## Transportation >

**Lviv could become Ukraine's first city without 'marshrutki,'** or gasoline-powered minibuses, Novoye Vremya reports. The City Council Transport Committee is drawing up a plan to shift transit to large city buses and electric trams. Lviv's ElectronTrans company makes electric buses and trams.