

Estonian Review

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FOREIGN NEWS



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Portuguese President Aníbal Cavaco Silva during the welcoming ceremony at Belém Palace, 20 July.

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Estonian and Portuguese Presidents: Small States Benefit from a Strong European Union

20 July - As part of his official visit to Portugal, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves met with President Aníbal Cavaco Silva of Portugal and Mrs. Maria Cavaco Silva.

At their meeting, the two presidents discussed at length the European Union and the co-operation of the two states within the framework of the EU; Mrs. Maria Teresa Gonçalves Ribeiro, the Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, also took part in the meeting.

"Although Estonia and Portugal are located at opposite ends of the European Union, the bilateral relations between the two countries have always been good," noted President Ilves, adding that opportunities for developing the mutually-beneficial relations could be sought and improved upon at all levels. When discussing the European Union, both heads of state emphasised that smaller countries like Estonia and Portugal have benefited considerably from being a part of the Union and European integration in general.

"The joint European projects are of great importance for small countries; therefore, countries like us need a strong European Union, while, in turn, the European Union needs a strong Commission," said President Ilves. The presidents of Estonia and Portugal also expressed their support for the prompt implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. According to President Ilves, the European Union should also proceed with the liberalisation of the energy and service markets.

The current economic recession was also discussed at the meeting, including the opportunities for more active co-operation in the sphere of information technology. According to President Ilves, the restoration of economic growth is largely dependent upon the implementation of innovative solutions, and Estonia and Portugal have good potential for co-operation in this sphere.

Trans-Atlantic relations were also an important issue discussed by President Ilves and President Silva.

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FOREIGN NEWS

Estonian Experts Advising Georgia on Integration into NATO

21 July - A seminar was held at the International Centre for Defence Studies, where Estonian experts shared experiences with Georgian officials on how to efficiently implement the Annual National Plans (ANP) required for accession to NATO.

The Georgian delegation at the seminar included officials from the Department for Co-ordination of Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Ministry of Defence and was led by Elene Khostaria, Deputy Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia.

According to Kristjan Prikk, Director of the International Co-operation Department of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, Estonia's knowledge as a new member of NATO is rather unique, which is why Estonia can greatly contribute to Georgia achieving its security endeavours.

"When Estonia applied for membership to NATO, our state officials obtained much experience valuable for Georgian officials today. For example, an important touchstone for Estonia was how to prepare ANP-s suitable and comprehensible for NATO and at the same time guarantee the implementation of these plans from the domestic viewpoint," Prikk explained.

One of the experts from the seminar - Piret Paljak, who in 2000-2004 was directly related to the preparation of the ANP-s of Estonia - said that in the case of annual national plans, the process of the preparation and realisation of the plans is very important. "Georgian officials seem to understand this well – just like in Estonia during our accession period, great attention is being paid on involving all state boards in the preparation and implementation of ANP-s," Paljak said.

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Portugal

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"Estonia considers the close partnership of the European Union and the United States of America, based on shared values, to be the cornerstone of both European and global security and stability," President Ilves stressed.

In the evening, President Ilves also participated in a discussion at the Catholic University of Portugal (Universidade Católica Portuguesa), where the challenges faced by Europe were discussed.

On Wednesday, President Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves participated as guests of honour in the official opening ceremony of the cascades of Belém Palace, the residence of the Portuguese president.

Georgia

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At the seminar, the experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonian Defence Forces, the International Centre for Defence Studies and the Estonian Atlantic Treaty Association also shared their experience.

Together with Ukraine and Montenegro, Georgia is one of the priority target-states of Estonian defence aid, where the Estonian state officials share the know-how obtained during the accession to NATO. Afghanistan is also one of the priority target-states of Estonian defence aid, where Estonia has shared wider security policy and administration-related know-how.

In addition to extensive development co-operation, Estonia has, in the framework of bilateral defence aid, financed the training of Georgian members of the Defence Forces in the Baltic Defence College, donated an infantry training simulation system to Georgia and contributed to several trust funds established for helping Georgia.

Estonian Project for Developing Palestinian e-Government Began

15 July - **The first part of the Estonian Foreign Ministry's development aid project for introducing the Palestinian National Authority to Estonia's experiences in developing e-government ended earlier this week.** Within the framework of the first part of the project, an expert group from the Estonian e-Governance Academy spent last week in Palestine to get an overview of the how Palestine's new e-government is developing and to establish future forms of co-operation.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that the project came to life thanks to the interest Palestine showed in learning about Estonia's experiences in developing an e-government. "Using up-to-date information and communication technology solutions will help with establishing essential e-services for citizens, and this will help the establishment of good and transparent governing standards," Paet emphasised, saying that good governance is a requirement for the development of a nation. "This first co-operation project creates a good basis and opportunities for future co-operation projects focused on modernising Palestine's public sector," he added.

The expert group that spent last week in Palestine included Arvo Ott, Liia Hänni and Hannes

Astok. "The next step is for the Palestinian Authority to make several strategic decisions regarding information and communication technology infrastructure as well as the development of e-services for citizens," said Hannes Astok upon returning from Palestine. "We met Palestinian government officials and representatives from IT firms who felt a sincere interest in how relations between the public and private sectors are arranged in Estonia to support the development of this essential sector," said Astok.

The project for introducing Estonia's e-experiences will continue in September with the second part, which will entail 20 directing officials from the Palestinian National Authority coming to Estonia for a week-long training at the e-Governance Academy.

Prime Minister: Estonia and Baden-Württemberg Linked by Interest in Innovation

15 July - **Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met with Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg Günther Oettinger, and it was jointly noted that the relations between the two countries have been very good.** Currently, the regions are mainly connected by their orientation on innovation and new technologies.

"The great and friendly relations between Estonia and Baden-Württemberg have become significantly tighter over the past years. Estonia sees continuing potential in the development of mutual economic co-operation," said Ansip at the meeting. He stressed that despite the global economic crisis, Estonia still offers great economic opportunities for the companies in Baden-Württemberg.

"I am especially glad to have Baden-Württemberg as a good co-operation partner of Estonia in Germany; it is a region renowned for its high-tech industry, intensive research and development and high innovation indicators," Ansip stated.

According to the EU Innovation Index, Baden-Württemberg is the most innovative region in Europe. This federal state has the largest number of patents registered per citizen and research and development expenditure amounts to four percent of the GDP.

Ansip noted that research and development and innovation are also amongst Estonia's priorities and that investments into new technologies will bring about a new economic upturn. "It is time for something new and for co-operation primarily in the field of innovation," he said.

The prime minister also met with Herbert Müller, the chairman of the Stuttgart region of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, with whom he also discussed prospective economic relations and joint projects.

According to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the federal state, 17 local enterprises have invested in Estonia and 418 enterprises are exporting goods to Estonia. In 2008, the volume of mutual trade in goods with the Federal State was MEUR 249, which constitutes 13% of Estonia's trade in goods with Germany.

The first official contacts in the mutual relations between Estonia and Baden-Württemberg were

concluded during President Lennart Meri's official visit to Germany in November 2000, during which he visited Stuttgart and met with Erwin Teufel, the Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg at that time. The Federal State of Baden-Württemberg has chosen Estonia as a country of destination for co-operation in Northern and Eastern Europe.

Estonian MEPs Appealing to Finance Baltic Sea Region Strategy

15 July - Speaking in the full house of the European Parliament on Wednesday, two members elected from Estonia urged the assembly to find resources for the financing of the Baltic Sea Strategy recently presented by the European Commission.

Ivari Padar, the first Estonian MEP to take the floor in the full house of the new membership of the parliament, praised the programme of the Swedish presidency for making the Baltic Sea strategy one of its priorities and pointed out that one of the initiators of the strategy was his forerunner, Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

"It is one of the best examples to show that members' of parliament initiatives achieve concrete results," Padar said.

He expressed the hope that the strategy would be passed in the European Council during the Swedish presidency period.

Padar pointed out that the next major duty was to find opportunities for financing the Baltic Sea Region Strategy.

"At the moment the strategy figures on a line of the European Union budget but with zero euros," he said. "We must now have to work in the name that the budget line would not remain empty. It is nice that the presidency has a high opinion of the strategy but real steps can only be taken if there are sums earmarked in the budget for this purpose."

Padar said that the four cornerstones of the strategy, environment, security, increased access and bigger welfare, were very important for Estonia.

"I particularly want to draw attention to one cornerstone of the strategy -- the environment, which is important also from the point of view of the would-be Nord Stream gas pipeline, of the dangers of which to the environment there has been a lot of talk," he added.

Tunne Kelam from IRL spoke in the same vein as Padar, thanking the Swedish government for supporting the Baltic Sea Strategy and carrying it out.

"This is a real step and an opportunity for balanced development of the European Union," Kelam underlined. "The European Parliament achieved a separate budget line for the Baltic Sea strategy, but it will have to be filled in with resources. Improvement of the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea, the most polluted sea, and turning the area into one of the most dynamically developing regions in the European Union cannot be based on one-off projects alone."

Estonia Welcomes Decision of Iceland's Parliament

16 July (BNS) - Estonia welcomes the decision of the Icelandic parliament to empower the government to start accession talks with the European Union.

"Estonia supports enlargement of the European Union also in Northern Europe and welcomes the decision of the Icelandic parliament to start movement on the course towards the European Union. We hope that Iceland will soon hand in an application for accession to the European Union," Foreign Minister Urmas Paet told BNS.

The minister added that as before Estonia was prepared to give advice to Icelandic experts in preparation to the accession.

At the beginning of June Paet suggested to Iceland's foreign minister, Össur Skarphedinnsson, that Estonia could share its experience on accession to the European Union.

He invited Iceland's representatives to Estonia in order to get acquainted with the Estonian experience in preparation for accession to the EU and Iceland's foreign minister accepted the proposal.

The Icelandic parliament made the decision after a debate over several days with 33 votes in favour and 28 against.

The decision by Iceland's parliament will give Iceland the opportunity of sending in an application for accession, in the name of which Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdadottir has been vigorously canvassing, already in July.

If the EU member countries approve the application, Iceland will put accession to the community on a referendum.

Estonia has a special relationship with Iceland, as the island country was the first in the world to recognise the restoration of Estonia's independence on 22 August 1991.

Two Estonian MEPs Elected to Foreign Affairs Committee

16 July (BNS) - Two members of the European Parliament elected from Estonia became members of the foreign affairs committee, the other four are members of the constitutional, transport, economic of social affairs committees.

The full house of the Parliament Thursday endorsed Tunne Kelam and Kristiina Ojuland as members of the foreign affairs committee. Kelam is also a member of the parliament's defence and security subcommittee.

Siiri Oviir is member of the employment and social affairs committees and of the women's rights and gender equality committees; Vilja Savisaar belongs to the transport and tourism committee.

Ivari Padar was endorsed as a member of the European Parliament's economic and finance committee and Indrek Tarand became member of the constitutional committee.

The foreign affairs committee of 76 members is the biggest standing committee of the European Parliament; the smallest committee is that of fishery.

Tunne Kelam, who was elected to the European Parliament a second time, is member of the biggest, European People's Party faction, which has 265 members out of 736.

Ivari Padar, a Social Democrat, is member of the Socialist group; Reformists Kristiina Ojuland and Centrists Siiri Oviir and Vilja Savisaar are members of the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals of Europe. Non-aligned Indrek Tarand is a member of the Greens and the European Free Alliance.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Government to Offer Free Courses to Over 5 000 Adults in Fall

15 July (BNS) - **The Estonian Education and Research Ministry has drawn up a plan of state-commissioned education for adults during the fall semester of 2009 in which free courses will be offered to 5 109 people.**

Those wishing to attend the courses can acquire knowledge at 38 vocational schools and other schools providing vocational education in all counties. The state-commissioned education comprises 363 courses in 30 different study programme groups at a total cost of 17.5 million kroons (EUR 1.1 mln).

There are courses for cooks, welders and electricians, accountants, potters, cleaners, small company managers, secretaries and many other specialities, the ministry informed BNS.

There are also many general ability courses, including specialised language learning and communication courses for service personnel. The emphasis is on specific programmes and follow-up courses, not so much on elementary courses.

The courses are intended above all for working people, but also for mothers on maternity leave, disabled people or adults staying at home for some reason but wishing to return to the labour market.

The courses will be financed by the European Social Fund and an Education and Research Ministry program for adults' professional training. The ministry finances professional training courses since 2008.

A two-year project of adults' professional training at vocational education institutions was concluded on June 30 this year, and 23,507 people from all over Estonia were trained or upgraded in them at the total cost of 60 million kroons (EUR 3.8 mln).

Nearly a Hundred Foreigners to Study Estonian at Tartu University This Summer

18 July (BNS) - **Nearly a hundred foreigners from 18 countries will start learning Estonian in international summer courses at Tartu University on 20 July.**

More than 50 people will start learning Estonian under English-speaking and 40 under Finnish-speaking teachers, Tartu University informed BNS. The biggest groups of language-learners are from Finland and Germany, but there are students also from Australia, Indonesia, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, Russia and other countries.

"Summer courses for foreigners have always been popular and year by year students come from more and more distant countries," said Olle Kesli, head of the in-service training section.

She said that for many people the courses were the first contact with the Estonian language and culture, which sometimes had developed into permanent interest. "It is nice that people continue to be interested and find time to take part in the summer courses, where in addition to language learning they also get an overview of cultural history and our rich historical legacy," Kesli said.

Summer language courses have been regularly held at Tartu University since 1998. In addition to language studies, the participants can take part in a cultural and entertainment programme, see sights in Tartu and elsewhere in South Estonia. This year the

language-learners will also visit the Viljandi Folk Music Festival and the Seto Kingdom Day.

Bear Population Highest in Estonia During Past Century

17 July (BNS) - **There are about 700 bears living in Estonian woods, the highest figure during the past one hundred years, the daily Eesti Päevaleht reported.**

The number of bears has recently increased, mainly because of the growing wild hog and roe deer populations. Due to the increased numbers, hunters will be issued more bear shooting licenses this year than usual, the paper wrote.

The greatest number of bears (110) have been counted in the north-eastern East-Viru County, with 95 of the animals living in Jõgeva County, 90 in West-Viru County and 80 in Järva County. The bear population is the smallest in the south-eastern Võru County where only five bears are reported to be living.

The bear population changes slowly, because bears achieve maturity at four to five years of age and mate every other year.

DEFENCE NEWS

Minister of Defence Stresses Importance of Developing Estonian Air Force

17 July - **Today, after the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Air Force, Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo stated that defence of the airspace is an integral part of Estonian national defence, which Estonia is currently maintaining in co-operation with its allies.**

"The 10-year development plan guiding the development of our defence capability foresees continuous development of the air force, especially via the construction of Ämari Air Base, the creation of medium range anti-aircraft system capability and promotion of a joint air policing model of the Baltic States," explained Aaviksoo.

The minister of defence added that the aircrafts of allied states, which visited Estonia this week, have been the visible symbols of reliable relations with our allies. "The air policing exercise of five countries and the demonstration flight of the US strategic bomber B-52 over Estonia this week vividly show that our airspace is an integral part of the airspace of NATO and its protection is equally important to all the allies," Aaviksoo stated.

Today, the Estonian Air Force is celebrating its 90th anniversary and on this occasion, a US strategic bomber B-52 and Czech Saab Gripen fighters, which are responsible for the air policing of the Baltic States, made a demonstration flight over Estonia.

The Estonian National defence development plan for 2009-2018 foresees the completion of the reconstruction of Ämari Air Base, after which NATO fighters could start basing in Ämari in the way our allies' fighters operate in Lithuania at the moment. After the completion of reconstruction, the air base will be capable of hosting strategic transport aircrafts and handling goods in the necessary capacity.

Estonia will not be developing an independent air policing capability during the next 10 years, yet Estonia will analyse different possibilities with Latvia and Lithuania in order to secure the defence of the

Baltic States airspace after the year 2018. According to the development plan, a mobile medium range anti-aircraft system will be developed in a limited extent during the next decade; close range anti-aircraft system will also be upgraded. A medium range anti-aircraft system includes necessary surveillance and control systems and medium range missile complexes, which can destroy aircrafts from the distance of about ten kilometres.

NATO Airspace Security Exercise in Baltic Countries Concluded

15 July (BNS) - **A NATO airspace security exercise in the Baltic countries' airspace, in which air force units from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic and the United States took part, was concluded on Wednesday.**

The aim of the two-day exercise was to train co-operation between the air forces of NATO member countries, to polish air security and procedures of airspace defence operations and increase linking of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with NATO's NATINADS air space system.

On the first day of the exercise the dropping of aid packages in unknown territory was trained; in their course a US C-130 Hercules transport aircraft performed an aid delivery exercise above Nurmsi Airfield and then landed on Tallinn Airfield.

The second day of the exercise concentrated on elements of electronic warfare, making it possible for air force and ground units to exercise anti-aircraft defence in as realistic a situation as possible. The exercise was part of the electronic warfare capabilities integration programme.

The aircraft flew above all the three Baltic countries with the airspace security exercise taking place above South Estonia and North Latvia. In addition to the transport aircraft, the Czech Gripen fighters also took part in the two-day exercise.

Maj. Rauno Sirk, chief of staff of the Estonian Air Force, said the airspace security exercise testified to the fact that NATO was present in all territories of the parties to the North-Atlantic Treaty. "For Estonia such an airspace security exercise and the NATO airspace security mission are very important signs of allied presence and mutual solidarity," Sirk said.

He said the exercise proved that the hardware and manpower at the disposal of the Estonian Air Force withstood operating in such situations.

Lt. Col. Andreas Faas from NATO's Ramstein air space control centre emphasised that the most important aim of such exercises was to ensure integral treatment and protection of the NATO airspace.

Defence Ministry Deputy State Secretary Sven Sakkov added that it was not possible to speak about Baltic airspace, there is but one single NATO airspace.

The flight operations of the exercise were co-ordinated and the aircraft were sighted from the Estonian Air Force control point at Ämari and in the Baltic countries' joint control centre at Karmelava, Lithuania.

Defence Ministry Permanent Undersecretary to Attend High-Level NATO College

16 July (BNS) - **Riho Terras, Permanent Undersecretary of the Estonian Defence Ministry, will soon go to study at a high-level NATO defence college in Great Britain, where future army leaders or chiefs of staff are usually trained, the daily Eesti Päevaleht reported.**

Col. Terras' studies at the Royal College of Defence Studies in Great Britain were decided by Defense Minister Jaak Aaviksoo and Defence Forces commander Ants Laaneots.

Lt. Gen. Ants Laaneots's term of office as Defence Forces commander will be over in 2011 and under the law now in force Laaneots can no longer be nominated into that post. As a result it is not ruled out that next summer Terras will return to become chief of the general staff and defense forces commander in December 2011.

According to Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo, Terras is a capable person who manages uniting the military and civilian aspects. "He is certainly a person the world will still hear about, either as a civilian or an active serviceman," Aaviksoo told the paper.

The course at the Royal College of Defense Studies, where Terras is going to study, mainly covers future military strategic planning and international relations.

During Terras' studies, the duties of the Defence Ministry permanent undersecretary will be performed by Lauri Tumm, presently a deputy undersecretary.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Estonians See Eesti Energia as Most Environmentally Friendly Company

16 July (BNS) - **Estonians regard the national power company Eesti Energia as the country's most environment-friendly enterprise, it appears from a survey by the international research company GfK.**

Eesti Energia was named as the most environmentally friendly enterprise by 14% of respondents, the study conducted for the PR agency PRB at the end of June showed.

In the opinion of 3% of those polled, the state forest management centre RMK deserves the title, and 2% backed the waste handling company Ragn-Sells, telecommunications operator Elion and the water company Tallinna Vesi each.

On the other hand, 43% of respondents could not name any company that was environmentally friendly.

The head of GfK's Estonian division, sociologist Mauri Soot, attributed Eesti Energia's success both to the company's high profile and coverage of its valuation of environment protection.

The survey included 1 062 people across Estonia.

Profit of Estonian Yliopiston Apteekki Pharmacy up 69 Percent Last Year

20 July (BNS) - **The operating company of the Estonian Ülikooli Apteek pharmacy chain, Yliopiston Apteekki OÜ, posted a profit of 8.7 million kroons (EUR 560 000) last year, up 69% from 2007.**

The company finds that the growth in profit was due to increased turnover and fall in the prices of purchased raw materials and components, it appears from the annual report of the company.

The sales proceeds of the chain totalled 144 million kroons last year, up by 20% against the year before.

During the year, Yliopiston Apteekki invested a total of 1.6 million kroons into material fixed assets, most of which was connected with the opening of new pharmacies and their installation.

The labour costs of the company totalled 11 million kroons last year and the two-member board were paid a remuneration of 1.2 million kroons.

The company had 12 pharmacies last year, and in addition to those Yliopiston Apteekki bought a subsidiary, Lihula Apteek OU, last year.

As of the end of 2008, the retained profit of the pharmacy chain was 21 million kroons. The board moved non-payment of dividends.

The owner of the chain is the Finnish pharmacy chain Yliopiston Apteekki OY.

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CULTURAL NEWS

Exposition of Tammsaare Museum in Sochi to Be Renewed

21 July (BNS) - **The Estonian museum dedicated to the classic author of Estonian literature Anton Hansen Tammsaare is preparing a new exposition for the writer's house museum in Krasnaya Polyana near the Russian city of Sochi that is to be ready in the fall.**

Designers Tuuli Aule and Peeter Pere are staying in Sochi this week to prepare the project.

Aule told BNS it is premature to speak about the new exposition at this point and the aim of their visit to Sochi is to study the situation on the spot and lay the groundwork for the display.

"The exposition of the Tammsaare museum will probably be opened in mid-September and it will run at least until the Sochi Olympic Winter Games in 2014," she said.

Tammsaare (1878-1940) lived for more than a year in Sochi and Krasnaya Polyana in the early part of the 20th century.

He headed to the Caucasus in March 1912 after catching tuberculosis to improve his health, staying in Sochi till May and then, heeding his doctor's recommendation, moved to Esto-Sadok, a village near Krasnaya Polyana founded by Estonian settlers in the late 19th century.

The writer stayed in Esto-Sadok till October 1912, moved to the town of Sukhumi for winter and returned to Estonia in May 1913. Fourteen months in the Caucasus fully restored his health.

A memorial plaque was attached to the house in which the writer had stayed in connection with his centenary in 1978 and in 1988 it became the Tammsaare House Museum.