

Estonian Review

E E S T I R I N G V A A D E

VOLUME 19 NO 26 JUL 22 - 28, 2009

FOREIGN NEWS

Paet: Iceland's Application to Join EU Discussed by Foreign Ministers

27 July - **Foreign Minister Urmass Paet participated in the European Union foreign ministers' council.**

The EU foreign ministers decided to forward Iceland's accession application to the European Commission for its opinion and to extend the European Union Monitoring Mission to Georgia until the middle of September 2010.

The European Union foreign ministers discussed enlargement policy with respect to Iceland's accession application, and the council decided to ask the European Commission for its assessment or *avis* in order to begin accession negotiations with Iceland. Foreign Minister Paet stated that the accession application and the asking of the Commission's opinion should not be politicised since this is first and foremost a technical process in which the fulfilment of accession criteria is addressed on the same bases for all countries. Foreign Minister Paet said that the foreign ministers' council reaffirmed in its conclusions that the European Union completely supports the European prospects of the Western Balkan nations as well, at the same time emphasising that Albania's accession application will be examined again following the elections in Albania. According to Paet, Iceland has already fulfilled about two-thirds of the EU accession requirements. "Estonia supports starting accession negotiations with Iceland soon, and following that Iceland's accession to the European Union," Paet noted.

The European Union foreign policy leaders talked about the situation in Georgia, specifically that the UN and OSCE observers have already departed and therefore the council of foreign ministers decided to extend the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) by one year. "The actions of the monitoring mission have been successful in implementing the principles of international law, creating trust, and preventing provocations, and the continued presence of an international mission in the region is necessary for ensuring stability and security," said Foreign Minister Paet. "We must also continue to work in the name of the monitors gaining access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia," Paet added. According to Foreign Minister Urmass Paet, the council's conclusions turn their attention to the unresolved political issues that are inhibiting the work of the EU Monitoring Mission and making the situation in the region unstable, while still emphasising support for Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

During the general affairs portion, the European Union presidency Sweden gave a brief overview of the priority areas for the next half year, namely economic and financial topics, preparations for the Copenhagen Climate Conference and the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the further development of enlargement policy and the Neighbourhood Policy. Foreign Minister Urmass Paet stated that for Estonia, one of the most important topics is the approval and efficient implementation of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy.

Continued on page 2

FOREIGN NEWS



Charge d'Affaires Daniel Erik Schaer at the cornerstone ceremony for the ACKU, 25 July.

Construction of New Building for Afghan Centre at Kabul University Begins

27 July - **On Saturday, 25 July, Estonian Charge d'Affaires in Afghanistan Daniel Erik Schaer participated in the laying of the cornerstone for the new building that is to house the Afghan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU).** The event was opened with speeches by director of the Afghan Centre Nancy Hatch Dupree and Afghan Minister of Higher Education Muhammed Azam Dadfar.

Charge d'Affaires Daniel Erik Schaer emphasised that one of the goals of Estonia's development co-operation is to help raise the level of education in Afghan society. "The construction of a new building for the Afghan Centre at Kabul University will provide students, instructors and researchers with better access to and opportunities to use the centre's information," Schaer stated. The establishment of a new building also allows for the creation of the necessary storage conditions for the ACKU's unique collection, which currently contains about 38 000 documents and is constantly growing.

In 2007, Estonia supported the compilation of the necessary project documentation for the creation of the new ACKU building with 500 000 kroons, as well as the renewing of the Afghan national archive and mobile library with 440 000 kroons. The architect of the new building is Sebastian May.

Council

(continued from page 1)

"The Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is becoming a good example of macro-regional co-operation for the Danube region and potentially other regions that are working out regional strategies," said Paet.

Paet stated that it is also essential for Estonia that an international climate agreement is reached and Eastern Partnership is successfully implemented during Sweden's presidency.

The European Union foreign ministers are also discussing the situation in Moldova. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that the most important recommendations are pointed out in the European Union appeal to Moldova prior to the parliamentary elections, emphasising the importance of free and honest elections and stressing the necessity of peaceful dialogue between the Communists and the opposition. "Relations between Moldova and the European Union must become deeper, and this must occur on the basis of common values," asserted Foreign Minister Paet. "Moldova must move forward with reforms that support the rule of law and ensure the democratic implementation of new elections," Paet specified. According to Estonian Foreign Minister Paet, Moldova must also resolve its problems with Romania in such a way that guarantees the equal treatment of all European Union member states and the abolishing of a visa requirement for Romanian citizens.

Estonian Journalists Observe Moldovan Elections

28 July (BNS) - **Estonian journalists will participate as observers in the early parliamentary elections in Moldova taking place on 29 July.**

The journalists Ahto Lobjakas and Krister Paris as well as the camera operator Anton Aleksejev will go to observe the elections in Moldova, Maarja Toots, spokeswoman for the Open Estonia Foundation, told BNS.

On the invitation of the Moldovan Independent Press Centre there will be 14 journalists from member countries of the European Union to draw international attention to the political situation in the country and to ensure unbiased media coverage of the elections.

In addition to visiting polling stations, the journalists will meet with representatives of local civic associations, parties and the media.

"Moldova's problems rise above all from the weakness of its democratic institutions and the immense political influence from Russia," said Mall Hellam, head of the Open Estonia Foundation.

According to a report published by leading Moldovan media organisations, the ruling Communist Party controls all the most important media publications and systematically restricts access of the opposition to the media.

Besides, civic associations have repeatedly drawn attention to the dominating position of Russian media in the Moldovan information space, Hellam said.

Estonia Becomes Chairman Nation of Good Humanitarian Donorship

24 July - **Estonia will be the co-chairman, along with Ireland, of the initiative Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) until July of 2010.** The GHD initiative provides an unofficial forum for humanitarian aid donors where nations that provide humanitarian aid can decide on a common approach and good practice principles.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that Ireland's proposal to become a co-chairman of Good Humanitarian Donorship is a great recognition for Estonia. "Our activity in the humanitarian sector has not gone unnoticed, and over time others are beginning to see Estonia as a nation that deals seriously with humanitarian aid," said Foreign Minister Paet.

"Estonia is happy to accept this proposal to be a chairman, as it gives us an opportunity to participate in the initiative to make the international humanitarian aid system more effective and co-ordinated," Paet noted. The foreign minister also added that being a co-chairman is a good and logical continuation of Estonia's activities in the humanitarian aid realm thus far.

Good Humanitarian Donorship got its start in 2003 when major donor countries, United Nations (UN) agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement came together in Stockholm. The chairmanship period lasts for one year. Ireland and Estonia are taking over the chairmanship from the Netherlands and the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

The members of Good Humanitarian Donorship are all the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, or the world's largest donors, who have been joined by all of the nations that have acceded to the European Union since 2004 through the approval of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Altogether the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative has 35 members (34 nations and the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office [ECHO]). Joining the initiative is on a voluntary basis.

Foreign Minister Paet Opened Estonian Honorary Consulate in Zwolle in the Netherlands

28 July - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet opened Estonia's third honorary consulate in the Netherlands in Zwolle.** The Estonian honorary consul in Zwolle is Nicolaas Anthony van de Griendt.

At the opening of the honorary consulate, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet expressed hope that the opening of the consulate would help to intensify relations between the two nations even more. "Estonia's new honorary consul would like to develop business and economic ties between Estonia and the Netherlands and is also interested in developing tourism contacts," said Paet. "The responsibility of the Estonian honorary consul is also to help Estonian citizens when necessary," he added.

Paet stated that Estonia's goal is to have a close-knit network of honorary consuls. "Honorary consuls are prepared to protect the interests of Estonia and

spread the word about Estonia voluntarily and without being paid for their work," Paet emphasised.

The consular region of the new Estonian honorary consul includes the provinces of Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe ja Overijssel in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands. The honorary consulate is located at the address Parkweg 9, 8011 CK Zwolle, Kingdom of the Netherlands. The honorary consulate can be reached by phone at +31 38 423 10 21, by fax at +31 38 423 10 22, or by email at consul@sphagnum.nl.

Nicolaas Anthony van de Griendt was born in Zwolle in 1958. He graduated from Rotterdam University in 1982. Nicolaas Anthony van de Griendt is a fifth-generation peat manufacturer and the director of the company Sphagnum Beleggingen B.V. Since 1996, he has also been the director of the peat production company AS Kraver, which works in Estonia and sells Estonian peat to the Western European market.

Estonia to Join UN Anti-Corruption Convention

23 July (BNS) - **The government approved a bill on Estonia's accession to the UN Convention against Corruption.**

The aim of the convention is to combat corruption in all its manifestations in both the public and the private sector. Besides the criminalisation of corruptive acts, great attention is paid to prevention, avoidance of criminally gained income and money-laundering, and international co-operation to devise measures against corruption, spokespeople for the government said.

Recovery of criminal assets and return to their country of origin is a significant new element in international co-operation on criminal law. This innovation has been seen as the reason why numerous developing countries have joined the convention.

By the beginning of July, 140 nations and organisations had acceded to the convention, among them most European Union member states, China, the United States and Russia.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Tallinn Zoo to Give Leopard Cubs to US, British Zoos

26 July (BNS) - **Three extremely rare Amur leopard cubs that were born at Estonia's Tallinn Zoo last May will soon start to live in US and British zoos.**

Mati Kaal, director of Tallinn Zoo, said an international co-ordinator found a new domicile for one of the cubs in the United States and the other two will go to Great Britain. "We will presumably send the animals away in September," Kaal added to BNS.

He said the cubs had been thriving well and were now almost as big as their mother.

The three Amur leopard cubs were born on 14 May last year. Darla, the cubs' mother, was born five years ago at the Friedrichsfelde Zoo in Berlin, and their father Freddi at Tallinn Zoo 14 years ago.

Kaal said the birth of the cubs was remarkable, as barely 50 individuals remain in the wilderness. "During the 20th century the area and population of the carnivore that lived in the broad-leaved forests of the Manchurian type in the Russian Primorski Krai

has dramatically contracted due to logging, destruction of their prey, frequent forest fires and poaching," Kaal said.

In joint activity between different countries, zoos and various international organisations, an attempt will be made in the future to establish a new man-made population on the basis of individuals born in captivity on the southern slopes of the Sikhote-Alin range, on the northern boundary of its former area.

Six Applications for Asylum Lodged in July

22 July (BNS) - **According to data provided by the Citizenship and Migration Board, 16 people have sought asylum in Estonia during this year, with six applications filed in July.**

Asylum applications have been lodged by citizens of Belarus, DR Congo, Georgia, Iraq, Mongolia, Russia, Syria, Uganda, Ukraine and the United States, and by stateless persons, spokespeople for the citizenship authority said.

None of the applications filed this year has been satisfied so far.

Figures of the European Union's statistics agency Eurostat show that around 240 000 people sought asylum in member countries of the bloc last year, including 15 in Estonia, 55 in Latvia and 520 in Lithuania.

Mostly Belarusian and Russian nationals have applied for asylum in Estonia, with mostly residents of Georgia, Afghanistan and Russia in Latvia and Afghans and Belarusians in Lithuania.

DEFENCE NEWS

First C-17 Globemaster Delivered to SAC Programme

28 July - **The opening ceremony for the NATO Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) programme was held at the Pápa airbase in Hungary yesterday.** As part of the programme, Estonia will be able to use C-17 Globemaster III 45 type strategic transport aircraft for up to 45 flight hours every year.

At the Pápa base, the first of the three C-17 aircraft to be procured was delivered to the SAC (Strategic Airlift Capability) programme today; also, the Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW) was activated.

For NATO the SAC programme is a pilot project enabling the countries participating to consolidate means to fill important key capability gaps. Estonia's participation in the SAC programme will allow Estonia to arrange for the transport of people and equipment to operations areas and back both on a planned basis and in special instances. For 45 flight hours a year, it is possible to make, for example, six flights on the Tallinn-Kabul route; also, participation in the SAC programme allows for oversize cargo (e.g. APC's) to be transported to Afghanistan with a non-stop flight.

According Colonel German Kesa, Commander of the Logistics Centre of the Defence Forces of Estonia, developing strategic airlift capability independently is too costly for a small country like Estonia. "Via the SAC programme, on the other hand, we will come by a significant freedom and assurance for instances where people or equipment need to be transported to an operations area promptly or, the other way around, speedily evacuated from there," Colonel Kesa said.

As part of NATO's strategic airlift capability programme, the countries participating in it will jointly procure three Boeing C-17 Globemaster III type aircraft, the administration and maintenance of which shall be performed by the newly established NAMO (NATO Airlift Management Organisation). The aircraft shall be stationed at the Pápa airbase in Hungary. The next two aircraft are planned for delivery to NAMO in the autumn. The programme is estimated to run through 2035.

The total cost of the programme will amount to USD 5-6 billion. For Estonia, the total outlay for participating in the SAC programme will be 676 million kroons, paid over a 26-year period. At the same time, if needed, flight hours may be sold to other countries participating in the program, to third countries or non-governmental organisations, such as the International Red Cross. Also, if needed, flight hours may be shared or exchanged for flight hours on smaller transport aircraft.

Flight hours may be used in support of both ongoing missions abroad and any potential operations of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the European Union battle groups. In addition to financial involvement, Estonia also staffs two non-commissioned officer positions in the programme.

The SAC programme has been joined by 10 NATO countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, USA) and by participants in the NATO Partnership for Peace Program, Finland and Sweden.

US Plane to Airlift Estonian Unit's Equipment to Afghanistan

24 July (BNS) - A U.S. transport plane C-17 is scheduled to land at the Tallinn airport on Friday afternoon to take aboard the equipment of the Estonian infantry company ESTCOY-E currently stationed in Afghanistan.

The Boeing C-17 Globemaster III was developed for the U.S. armed forces in the early 1980s to provide rapid strategic airlift of troops and equipment.

On Monday aircraft builders will deliver to NATO the alliance's first jointly procured C-17 Globemaster III at a ceremony in the Hungarian Papa airbase.

Ten NATO member states, among them Estonia, and non-NATO Finland and Sweden, participate in the Strategic Airlift Capability programme.

The alliance has so far frequently had to rely on the assistance mostly of the United States and Russia to solve its transportation problems.

Estonia can use 1 125 flight hours in all until 2033. The cost of one hour is slightly more than 600 000 kroons (EUR 38 000).

The 134-strong ESTCOY-E, deployed to Afghanistan to secure the upcoming presidential election, left Estonia on 8 July.

BALTBAT Remains a Joint Project of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

28 July - Yesterday Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo agreed with his Lithuanian colleague Rasa Juknevičienė to add additional units to the Baltic Battalion after Latvia was forced to reduce its commitment due to the difficult economic situation.

In 2006, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania decided to jointly commit a battalion-size unit to the 14th rotation of the NATO Response Force (NRF-14) in

the first half of 2010. The leading country of the battalion of about 800 men is Lithuania. Estonia has promised to include an infantry company, a reconnaissance platoon, a logistic support unit, a military police unit and staff officers, altogether 192 members of the Defence Forces. So far, this is the largest commitment of the Estonian Defence Forces to NATO Response Forces.

According to Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo, the addition of the Baltic Battalion to the NRF is an important project for Estonia and the other Baltic states. "In order to maintain our reliability, it is very important that despite difficult economic conditions this project remains a joint undertaking of the three Baltic States. I am glad that Latvia still maintains its involvement, although in reduced form, and Lithuania has decided to take on significantly larger additional duties," said the minister of defence. It was decided yesterday that Lithuania will add an additional infantry company and an anti-tank platoon and Estonia will add explosive ordnance disposal and military police specialists to the battalion.

The co-operation training of the Baltic infantry battalion took place during the "Baltic Eagle" exercises in Latvia at Adazi military training area at the beginning of June, after which the battalion received NATO accreditation.

The NATO Response Force was established in 2003 as an integrated navy, army and air forces joint unit to fulfil the tasks of the North Atlantic Council. NATO Response Force combines elite units that can be deployed to various parts of the world in a five days notice to fulfil military tasks.

Estonian Mine-Hunter to Sail for NATO Mission

25 July (BNS) - The Estonian mine-hunter Sakala will Saturday night sail for a mine countermeasure mission of the NATO Response Force, where it will stay till the end of the year.

ENS Sakala has belonged to the 13th rotation of the response force, NRF-13, since the beginning of this month and will join the standing mine countermeasures group SNMCMG1 on 1 August. Estonian naval personnel will in the composition of the group perform mine clearance operations and drills in different spots of the world.

The mine-hunter will return to Estonia at the beginning of December and remain on standby until 5 January 2010, military spokespeople said.

As part of the response force, the vessel must be ready to perform military tasks within two days of receiving orders.

Before being assigned to the response force, the Sakala passed a NATO evaluation process. The readiness of the ship was judged by Estonian experts and staff officers of NATO's Maritime Component Command Northwood from the United Kingdom.

The NATO Response Force was created in 2003 as an integrated unit made up of land, air and sea components to perform duties assigned by the North Atlantic Council.

Estonia has previously assigned the naval flagship Admiral Pitka and mine-hunters Admiral Cowan and Sulev to the naval component, explosive ordnance clearance and military police contingents to the land component, and a unit formed on the basis of the Kaitseleit (Defence League) voluntary corps to the Nordic Battle Group. In 2010 Estonia

will contribute to NRF 192 personnel in the composition of the Baltic Battalion.

The Sakala is one of the three Sandown class mine-hunters Estonia purchased from the United Kingdom.

Detailed Jägala Army Base Reconstruction Plan to be Completed by June 2010

25 July - **The Ministry of Defence signed a procurement contract for the compilation of a detailed plan for the Jägala army base.** The Jägala army base, to be established in the next decade, will mainly accommodate the military units of the Defence Forces that are suffering from lack of space in Tallinn.

The public procurement for the compilation of the detailed plan for the Jägala army base was granted to AS Koger & Partnerid and pursuant to the procurement contract, the plan will be completed by 30 June 2010. The total cost of the procurement of the detailed plan will be EEK 285 000.

The detailed plan will be compiled for the Jägala army base as an object of significant spatial impact. Together with the compilation of the detailed plan, the environmental impacts of the army base will also be strategically assessed to identify the potential effects of the base on the surrounding environment, which must be taken into account during construction and use.

According to the Defence Development Plan for 2009-2018 approved by the government in January, in the next decade Jägala will accommodate the Guard Battalion, the Staff and Signal Battalion, the Logistics Battalion and the Reconnaissance Battalion that are currently suffering from lack of space in Tallinn, as well as the Staff of the 1st Infantry Brigade from Paldiski. These military units are located in Tallinn in depreciating army bases. Also the current location of the military units does not facilitate the conduct of military trainings, as the traffic conditions in Tallinn complicate access to exercise fields and the activity of the Defence Forces clashes with the interests of the people living in the suburban new house districts.

In Jägala, of the current buildings, only the historic manors are planned to be preserved, and all the necessary barracks, staff and study buildings, warehouses, garages, obstacle courses, etc., will be built for carrying out training.

The reconstruction of the Jägala army base will be the most capacious construction project of the Ministry of Defence in the following decade. At that, the construction of Jägala base is being considered as a Public-Private Partnership.

In addition to the reconstruction of the Jägala army base, the Defence Development Plan foresees the full completion of the Jõhvi, Tapa, Võru and Paldiski army bases of the Defence Forces, as well as all exercise fields and the central training area of the Defence Forces.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Enterprise Estonia Supports Technology Investments with EUR 20 Mln

22 July (BNS) - **The Enterprise Estonia Foundation gave 315 million kroons (EUR 20 mln) of support to the technology investments of 39 industrial companies.**

Nearly 170 companies filed applications in the second round of technology investment subsidies, applying for a total subsidy of 900 million kroons.

Enterprise Estonia gave the biggest sum of investments, more than a hundred million kroons, to engineering companies, which accounted for nearly one third of the applications.

Enterprise Estonia invested more than twenty million kroons in printing, wood processing, the food industry, and rubber and plastic products manufacturing.

Tallinn Airport Earns EUR 172 000 Profit in Six Months

24 July (BNS) - **The Estonian state-owned AS Tallinna Lennujaam (Tallinn Airport Ltd) earned a consolidated net profit of 2.7 million kroons (EUR 172 500) in the first half of 2009.**

Tallinna Lennujaam said that the consolidated turnover of the company was 175.6 million kroons in H1. In all, consolidated turnover contracted by 13% against the first six months of 2008.

Rein Loik, board chairman of Tallinna Lennujaam, said that the results of the group were positive despite drastic contraction in the number of passengers and freight volumes. The result was achieved mainly thanks to the optimisation of operations and economy of expenses.

In six months Tallinna Lennujaam served 658 965 passengers. Compared with the same period in 2008 the number of passengers has contracted by 26.5%. Despite such a large fall in the number of passengers, the number of destinations has remained at the same level with 2008, but the frequency of flights has dropped.

In 2008 Tallinna Lennujaam earned 427 million kroons of revenue and received a net profit of 16.7 million kroons.

Turnover of Estonian Postal Market Totalled EUR 76.7 Mln in 2008

22 July (BNS) - **The Estonian Competition Board said that the turnover of the whole postal market totalled 1.2 billion kroons.**

It appears from the report of the postal services sphere of the Competition Board that the turnover of universal postal services had the biggest turnover, 40% of the market, followed by courier services with 36% and delivery of periodical publications 123%. Direct mail, letter post and other postal services of Eesti Post accounted for the remaining 11% of the turnover.

Last year universal postal services were provided only by the state-owned Eesti Post, but besides Eesti Post periodicals were also delivered by the privately owned Express Post.

Letter post was delivered by two companies, direct mail by six companies and courier items by 38 companies.

British Company Wishes to Buy Large Quantities of Wood Chips from Baltics

22 July (BNS) - **The British company MGT Power wants to buy a million tons of woodchips a year from the Baltic countries starting in 2012 for the needs of a woodchip-fuelled power plant, the daily Postimees reported.**

In the next few months the British company is planning to sign long-term contracts for the purchase of woodchips from Estonia.

The capacity of the power plant the company is planning to build is 295 megawatts and it will be built at a cost of 500 million pounds.

The British company's plans will sharply increase the demand for woodchips and the price of the fuel is likely to rise. This, in turn, may lead to higher prices of electricity and heat, said Tiit Veeber, member of the supervisory board of Fortum Tartu.

Of major Estonian power plants, the Vao Power Plant near Tallinn that was launched this spring and Fortum's Tartu power plant are fuelled by woodchips. Also the Narva Elektriijaamad (Narva Power Plants) subsidiary of the Eesti Energia power utility and a combination power plant Fortum is building in Pärnu are planning to start using woodchips as their fuel.

Estonian Travel Agency: Sale of Holiday Trips Has Grown by Fifth on Year

28 July (BNS) - **The demand for holiday trips grew in the first half of 2009 by more than 20% in comparison with the same period last year, the Estonian travel agency Wris says.**

According to the agency, people prefer more favourably priced trips abroad.

The most popular destinations in winter were Egypt and the Canary Islands while during the summer holidaymakers mostly headed to Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy's Amalfi Coast and Spain.

ESTONIAN REVIEW (ISSN 1023-1951)

Is issued by the
Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ISLANDI VÄLJAK 1, TALLINN, ESTONIA 15049

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Estonian Review is compiled in co-operation with
the Baltic News Service <http://www.bns.ee/>

