

Estonian Review

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STATE VISIT TO SPAIN



President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves and King of Spain Juan Carlos, 9 July 2007 Madrid.

Estonian President Acquaints Spanish King with Cyber Defense Center Idea

Jul 09 - **President Toomas Hendrik Ilves acquainted King of Spain Juan Carlos at a meeting in Madrid with an idea to set up an international cyber defense center in Estonia.**

"I very much hope that Spain will send to the Estonian cyber defense center its experts who could analyze here our experience of recent attacks so as to prepare themselves for similar future incidents," the president said. The attacks on Estonian websites in April and May were definitely not the last, the president added.

Ilves and Juan Carlos also talked about bilateral cultural relations and recent Russian political developments.

According to the Estonian head of state, a direct and open dialogue has to be held with Russia which however requires a uniform attitude on the part of European Union member countries. "We are interested in a businesslike dialogue with Russia but it should be businesslike on both sides a," Ilves criticized Russia.

Estonian President Stressed in Spain the Importance of Common EU Energy Policy

Jul 10 - **Estonia's president in Spain once again underlined the importance of a common energy policy of the European Union.**

Energy policy was among the topics Toomas Hendrik Ilves discussed with the chairman of the Congress of Deputies, Manuel Marin Gonzalez.

Migration and the problems caused by it were under discussion as a critical issue for EU border states Estonia and Spain. "Next to stepping up border controls, it is vital to pay attention to the underlying causes of illegal immigration and address development issues," the Estonian head of state observed.

Ilves was pleased with the deepening of ties between the Estonian and Spanish parliaments, citing the formation of a Spain friendship group in Estonia's Riigikogu and a Baltic caucus in the Spanish legislature.

FOREIGN NEWS

Spain to Open Cervantes Institute Centre in Estonian Capital

Jul 09 - The foreign minister of Spain told his Estonian colleague at a meeting in Madrid that a centre of Cervantes Institute will soon be opened in the Estonian capital.

Miguel Angel Moratinos and Urmas Paet spoke about the good relations between the two countries, paying much attention to cultural cooperation, and Paet was pleased to observe that Spain is very popular among Estonian students. "Last year 38 Estonian students were studying in Spain, which makes up almost a tenth of the total student exchange in the framework of the Erasmus program," he said.

Moratinos confirmed Spain's interest in Estonia and spoke about preparations for the launch of the Cervantes Institute centre in Tallinn.

Besides bilateral ties, primarily European Union-related topics -- reform treaty, enlargement and neighbourhood, migration and energy policies -- were under discussion in the meeting. The ministers talked also about cooperation in international organizations and the situation in Kosovo.

With regard to the EU reform treaty, the parties agreed that it would be good if its text could be agreed within this year.

The ministers' views coincided also on the enlargement of the EU and both supported continuation of talks with Croatia and Turkey.

Estonia, Spain Conclude Treaty on Education, Culture and Research

Jul 10 - Estonia's minister for culture and Spanish foreign minister signed a treaty on cooperation in education, culture and research.

The agreement creates a solid basis for the development of bilateral relations in the fields of culture and education and an opportunity for different institutions to map out more concrete action plans, Culture Minister Laine Jänes said.

"A centre of the Cervantes Institute is about to be set up in Estonia, and more and more students are interested in studying Spanish at Tartu University," the minister observed. "Not only are thousands of Estonian tourists holidaying in the sunny Spain, but also an increasing number of Spaniards are discovering Estonia as a country with a rich and exciting cultural life."

Estonian Foreign Minister: Solution to Georgian Conflicts must be Based on Country's Unity

Jul 04 - Solutions to Abkhazian and Southern Ossetian conflicts must be based on Georgia's territorial integrity, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said.

Paet met in Batumi with Marab Antanadze, the Georgian conflict settlement minister, who gave an overview of the frozen conflicts and the situation in Southern Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Paet underlined that the solutions in Abkhazian and Southern Ossetia issues must proceed from the principle of Georgia's territorial integrity.

During his meeting with Peter Semneby, the special representative of the European Union in Southern

Caucasus, the discussion focuses on EU activity at solving the Abkhazian and Southern Ossetia conflicts.

Paet expressed support to increasing the role of the EU in the solution of the frozen conflicts. "Estonia is in favour of all proposals directed at improving mutual trust and increasing security," said Paet, adding that the situation in the frozen conflicts areas should not become strained any further.

Estonian President Raised Visa Waiver Issue with US Congressmen

Jul 05 - Meeting with US congressmen in Tallinn, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves raised the issue of the visa waiver program.

"The visa waiver program is dignified treatment of allies," the Estonian president said. The representatives of the Congress promised their support to Estonia.

Visiting Tallinn last November Bush promised to raise the US visa waiver issue for Estonian nationals in the US Congress without delay.

"I will do it as soon as possible," he said at a joint press conference with Ilves. "I am pleased to announce that I am going to work with our Congress and our international partners to modify our visa waiver program."

Meeting with the delegation the president also talked about the intended NATO cyber defence centre in which Estonia has invited US specialists to take part.

Other themes addressed at the meeting pertained to EU-US relations and the need to speak in one voice in many world policy issues, as well as to Russia.

Estonian Foreign Minister Discussed Visa Waiver with US Congressmen

Jul 06 - Meeting with a delegation of the US House of Representatives in Tallinn, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet once again raised the issue of visa waiver.

"We expect our visitors' vigorous activity in the legislative process pertaining to the visa waiver, because Estonia meets all the requirements of the visa waiver program," Paet said.

The congressmen expressed full support to Estonia in the visa waiver issue.

During the meeting Paet thanked the members of Congress for its support to Estonia.

The leader of the delegation John Boehner said that the congressmen's high-level visit expressed the United States' interest in Estonia and their continued support to our country.

The discussion also touched upon relations between the European Union and the United States.

Paet underlined the importance of transatlantic relations for Estonia, underlining that there was still room for development in those relations.

Estonian Prime Minister and US Congressmen: Relations of Ally between Two Countries to Continue

Jul 05 - Meeting at the Estonian government seat of Stenbock House, Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and a delegation of US Congressmen confirmed that relations of ally between the two countries would continue.

Ansip underlined the importance of US support to Estonia both at present and when Estonia was restoring its independence and there were still Soviet occupation forces in the country.

"Estonia has been very successful in the construction of a democratic country based on market economy and US support has been very important for that process," the prime minister said.

At the same time US delegates thanked Estonia for the assistance the country had offered as a NATO member country.

Ansip in his turn underlined that Estonian soldiers had lost their lives on foreign missions defending peace and so defending also Estonia's security.

US-Baltic Relations Mark 85 Years

Jul 4 - In a statement the US State Department recalled the 85th anniversary of continuous diplomatic relations with the Baltic nations, and American officials say their support for the hard-earned freedom of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is no way meant to intimidate modern-day Russia.

In the statement, the State Department recalled the 85 years of turmoil and peace in US-Baltic relations and said that Russia need not fear democratic, peace-loving neighbours.

"Their democratic ideals and their democratic success is not a threat to anyone, least of all their great neighbour Russia," US diplomat Daniel Fried said earlier in June.

Meeting with the foreign ministers of the Baltic nations in June, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice underlined that the United States stood by the Baltic people even when the days seemed very dark.

In its statement, the State Department said that for just more than half a century, from 1940 to 1881, the Baltic nations were a focal point of US relations with the former Soviet Union.

Europe Needs a Vision of World in 25 Years - Estonian President

Jul 09 - Europe needs a vision of what the world will be like in 25 years' time, the Estonian head of state said.

"Today the European Union, with its half billion inhabitants, is still able to compete in the quality of life with the United States, China and India," the president said. "However, we must understand that those regions are growing very rapidly and we will lag behind if we do not open our markets to competition," he added.

According to Ilves, the internal openness of the EU has till now been the key to success in global competition, but this alone will not suffice.

"Current thinking in the European Union has not given reason for optimism -- the member states are too protectionist and this not only in respect to extra-community nations, but also regarding other member states," Ilves warned. "We must liberalize and confidently open up to competition," he added.

The European Union therefore needs a common energy policy, if we do not want to be subjected to divide and conquer policies in the future, the president said.

Estonian Foreign Minister Sent Invitation to OESCE Ethnic Minorities Commissioner

Jul 06 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet sent a letter of congratulations to Knut Vollebaek, high commissioner for ethnic minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) and said he was waiting him for a visit to Estonia.

In his letter, Paet congratulated the former Norwegian foreign minister with his new capacity and wished him success in performing his duties in that important post.

The minister said that the political and social rights of ethnic minorities reflected the general level of democracy in each country and they would always have to be observed.

"I therefore suggest that you visit on your own initiative as many OSCE countries as possible," Paet added.

Paet said that the high commissioner for ethnic minorities was always welcome also in Estonia.

Estonia to Support African Union Mission in Sudan

Jul 08 - Estonia is going to support the African Union mission in Sudan with half a million kroons (EUR 32,000).

The money for the mission will be allocated by the government's decision from the reserve fund.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said support for the African Union mission will enable it to continue operations in the conflict area. "Joint efforts of international forces are essential in order to find the necessary resources enabling the African Union mission to continue its activity and stabilize the situation in Sudan," the minister underlined.

Earlier this year, Estonia allocated 500,000 kroons to the World Food Program for Darfur.

Russian President Did Not Invite Estonian Leaders to Finno-Ugric Festival

Jul 10 - Russian President Vladimir Putin has not invited Estonian leaders to a Finno-Ugric festival in the Mordovian republic.

The Russian head of state invited the president of Finland and the prime minister of Hungary to the Finno-Ugric culture festival taking place in the Mordovian republic but none of Estonian leaders was extended an invitation.

A three-way meeting between the Russian president and the leaders of the two Finno-Ugric countries will take place in the Mordovian capital, Saransk, on July 19 at Putin's initiative.

Representatives of the state chancellery and the Foreign Ministry have admitted that Estonian leaders have not been invited to the festival of kindred peoples. Estonia has been invited to participate in the cultural events of the festival and this is being coordinated by the Moscow-based cultural attaché Andra Veidemann.

Russia Refused Legal Assistance in Cyber Attacks Investigation

Jul 06 - The Estonian Public Prosecutor's Office said that Russia refused legal assistance in the investigation of cyber attacks.

The Public Prosecutor's Office said that it had sent to the Office of the Russian Prosecutor-General a request for legal assistance on May 10, asking for cooperation in the finding persons, possibly residing in Russia, behind the anti-Estonian cyber attacks.

In its reply the Office of the Russian Prosecutor-General refused to comply with the Estonian request.

Estonian Public Prosecutor Norman Aas said that it was extremely regrettable that Russia had refused to cooperate, particularly in a situation where a large

part of the international public had by today understood the danger of cyber crime and was looking for opportunities how to jointly fight it.

The request for legal assistance was sent in accordance with the Estonian-Russian legal assistance and legal relations treaty.

Estonian MEP: Europe Should Change Rhetoric Vis a Vis Russia

Jul 05 - Marianne Mikko, a Social-Democrat member of the European parliament elected from Estonia, said Europe should revise its rhetoric in relations with Russia.

"Instead of speaking about "strong Russia" we should call on our Russian partner to be democratic," Mikko said. "Let us use the phrase "democratic Russia" with respect to Russia."

Mikko and Andres Tarand from the same faction attended a seminar in Lithuania on relations between the European Union and Russia.

Estonia: Vehicle Lines to Cross Border at Narva Grow Further

Jul 06 - The line at Estonia's eastern border has grown further and there are more than 400 vehicles waiting to get into Russia.

According to the Tax and Customs Board the line was of 430 vehicles and the expected time of waiting to cross the border was 120 hours.

The line has somewhat contracted at Koidula on the south-eastern border where 153 vehicles were lined up, with about 46 hours to wait.

The lines to cross the border to Russia from Estonia, Latvia and Finland have grown now longer and now shorter. In August and November the lines at Narva were of more than 500 vehicles and they had to wait for more than a week to cross the border.

The lines started to build up after President Vladimir Putin demanded more efficient work from the customs and Russian customs officials began checking vehicles more thoroughly. Also the growth in freight flows and outdated checkpoint structures is playing a role.

UNICEF, Estonian Ministries Conclude Partnership Deal

Jul 07 - The Social Affairs and Education and Science ministries and the National Committee of the UN Children's Fund UNICEF have signed a partnership agreement to promote child protection in Estonia.

The objective of the three-way cooperation is to foster the welfare of children, ensure protection of children's rights and improve children's opportunities in life.

The parties agreed to work actively together to shape policies directed at securing children's rights. Attention is to be paid to a number of areas such as children and human trafficking, children and drug abuse, children and violence, and children with special needs.

DEFENCE NEWS

Estonian President Paid Homage to Fallen Soldiers

Jul 04 - Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves paid homage to and thanked Kalle Torn and Jako Karuks, Estonian soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

In the ceremony of paying the last tributes to the soldiers in Tapa the president recalled his April meeting in Paldiski with the defence forces going to Afghanistan.

"I then said that I was proud of your courage and bravery to serve at the front line of Estonian security policy interests, to serve Estonia," he said. "I also wished you soldier's luck. Yet you are now here, covered with the Estonian flag. Unfairly early, fallen on Victory Day. In fact, bullets and shell fragments are unfairly blind, as is the war itself."

The president said that Estonian soldiers were serving in Afghanistan so that the country could live in peace, that there would be safety for its people and that the country would not be a threat to other countries.

"Life will go on, past our mourning and sympathy. Memories and a sense of gratitude and the knowledge that we will not forget our soldiers will remain," the president said. "We will not forget Kalle Torn and Jako Karuks, as we will not forget Andres Nuiamäe and Arre Illenzeer." Ilves added that neither should we forget the soldiers wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Estonian Defence Forces Sent New APCs, Truck to Afghanistan

Jul 5 - The Estonian defence forces have sent to Afghanistan two new armoured personnel carriers and an armoured truck for logisticians.

An armoured personnel carrier for the medical services, another APC for infantry and the armoured MAN truck were dispatched by maritime transport to Great Britain

From the UK the machines will be transported to Kandahar by air from where they will be taken overland to Helmand Province.

Estonia to Draw up Cyber Defence Strategy

Jul 05 - The Estonian government approved a plan of action against cyber attacks, under which, among other things, a cyber defence strategy would be drawn up, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Communications said.

The Cabinet found that the cyber attacks in April and May could not paralyze normal daily activity in Estonia. At the same time the cyber attacks were a clear sign that it was possible to organize activities against the state and that in a certain situation and in certain volumes they could turn into an important security risk. The government also stated that the reaction to the attacks had been adequate.

Above all the plan of action would focus on the improvement of the existing processes of preparation for special situations in the light of the cyber attacks.

It is also necessary to draw up a cyber defence strategy that will highlight the peculiarities proceeding from cyberspace and link them with today's security strategy. In accordance with that strategy the information security frameworks in effect at present would have to be complemented.

The plan of action has to focus also on complementing the legal space in order to give a legal basis to fighting against cyber crime. The plan of action also plans strong measures on the international level. One of the expected important aims is that countries should sign and ratify a convention against cyber crime.

US Government to Send Cyber Investigators to Estonia

Jul 04 - **The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will send to Estonia an expert to make a closer study of cyber attacks.**

A specialist of US-CERT (U.S. Computer Emergency Response Team), a division of Homeland Security Department, will arrive in Estonia to help analyze the large volume of data generated by the attacks, said Gergory Carcia, assistant secretary for DHS for cyber security and telecommunications. A member of the US Secret Service would also come to Estonia to help with training on incident response and computer crime investigations.

Estonia Interested in US Participation in Cyber Defence Centre

Jul 06 - **Estonia is interested in the participation of the United States in the would-be NATO cyber defence competence centre**

Estonian Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo and the US Congress delegation that visited Estonia surveyed the defence forces communication and information systems training and development centre (SIVAK) and a cooperative cyber defence competence centre working in its composition, the Defence Minister reported.

The minister gave to the Congressmen an overview of the development of the cyber defence sphere and of the cyber attacks that hit Estonia this spring.

Aaviksoo confirmed Estonian interest in the participation of the United States in the would-be NATO cyber defence competence centre and expectation of practical cooperation with the US in the cyber defence sphere.

Estonian Officer to Take Command of Baltic Naval Squadron

Jul 08 - **The Latvian capital Riga will host a change of command ceremony in which the joint Baltic mine hunting unit BALTRON will pass under the command of Estonia's Lt. Comdr. Andrei Leit.**

Leit will take over the command from Cmdr. Juris Roze of Latvia.

Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian naval vessels Admiral Pitka, Virsaitis, Imanta and Suduvis are to arrive in Riga for the occasion.

Meeting in April, a military committee of commanders of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian defence forces decided to appoint Leit the new commander of BALTRON.

BALTRON last had an Estonian chief, Lt. Cmdr. Sten Sepper, in 2004.

BALTRON is a joint project of the Baltic countries' navies the groundwork for which was laid in Tallinn in 1998. The squadron's main task is to clear the Baltic Sea of explosive devices of the World War II era.

New Estonian Navy Minehunter Arrived at Home Port

Jul 05 - **The Admiral Cowan, a new Scottish-built minehunter of the Estonian Navy, arrived at its home port of Tallinn.**

After a line-up of the crew on the foredeck they could meet with relatives who had arrived to welcome them home.

"In minehunters the most important features are the systems of the hunting and deactivation of mines and other ordnance. Thanks to the Admiral Cowan entering the service the Estonian Navy has made a

considerable development in that respect," said acting commander of the Navy Cmdr Peeter Ivask.

The Admiral Cowan is the first of three Sandown Class minehunters the Estonian Navy is buying from Great Britain.

Estonian Defence Minister to Buy Sniper Weapons for Defence Forces

Jul 06 - **Estonian Defence Minister has signed procurement contracts with French and Finnish companies on the purchase of sniper weapons.**

The minister said 12.7 millimetre PGM Hecate II sniper weapons would be purchased from the French company PGM Hecate II and 8.6 millimetre Sako TRG-42 sniper rifles from the Finnish company Sako Oy.

The aim of the procurement contract is to create preconditions to bringing Estonian specialized sniper units' capability to the world's top level.

Estonia will acquire for the professional snipers of the Reconnaissance Battalion, the Ordnance Disposal Platoon and the Scouts Battalion sniper weapons of a high calibre and target range of up to two kilometres on the basis of the sniper concept worked out by the defence forces, in order to ensure the technical basis for a qualitative rise in the sniper capability and better security of units at foreign missions.

Estonian Defence Minister Discussed Air Policing and Cyber Defence in Romania

Jul 05 - **Meeting with his Romanian colleague Estonian Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo discussed cyberdefence and policing of the Baltic countries' air space.**

Meeting on an official visit for the first time, the two ministers were delighted with their common views and principles.

The issues touched upon pertained to aspects of security of the Black Sea region and participation in international operations.

"Although our countries are of different sizes, we are situated in different regions and speak different languages, we have similar understandings on many points," Aaviksoo said.

The ministers also discussed the issue of air space policing, because from this August to October Romania will take part with four fighters in the Baltic countries' air space security rotation.

The Romanian minister underlined the importance of NATO's air space security and its importance for the Baltic countries and expressed firm support to it.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonian Parliament to Discuss Politics in EU

Jul 06 - **The Estonian parliament is going to discuss the country's EU policy in 2007-11 and the government is expected to endorse the document in October.**

The European Affairs Committee (ELAK) in the Estonian parliament discussed a government bill on Estonia's European Union policy in the years 2007-2011 and decided to send it for opinions to the parliament factions and committees.

ELAK will wait for views of the factions and committees until September 17 because it wants to conclude handling of the bill in parliament before the prime minister's report in the full house planned for October 2.

In that report the prime minister will give an annual overview of the activity of the government in the execution of its EU policy.

"We find that it is important that the bill in question should take into consideration the experience of the earlier document, the government's EU policy in 2004-2006 as well as views of different political forces, citizens' associations and business people," chairman of the committee Marko Mihkelson said.

OSCE Advised Estonia to Continue Work on E-voting Security

Jul 09 - Observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe who monitored Estonia's general election in March suggest in their report released in July that Estonia continue work to enhance the security of Internet voting.

The report makes no mention of any serious breaches or shortcomings detected during the March polls but give the central election commission some recommendations for improving the e-voting system.

Thus, the OSCE observers recommend that the Internet voting process be reviewed starting from technical solutions and ending with the security of the system. The report mentions in particular the technical possibility that the data of an online voter can be accessed via Internet and used to compromise the integrity of the vote.

The report contains a detailed description of the security of the Internet voting system and on the whole gives it a positive evaluation.

Half of Estonians Satisfied with Their Financial Situation - Survey

Jul 06 - Slightly more than half or 53 percent of Estonians consider their personal financial situation to be good and 4 percent, excellent, it appears from a study by AC Nielsen pollsters.

The prospects of finding work are seen as very good by 15 percent and as good, by 52 percent of respondents.

The global survey places Estonia in the middle of the consumer confidence index scoreboard.

Estonian consumers see the future in rosier colours than those in other Baltic countries. The Estonian consumer confidence index is 100 points compared to 94 and 92 points in Latvia and Lithuania, respectively.

Half of the Baltic States' residents don't think now is the best time to buy the things they need. Some 12 percent of Estonians have no money left over after paying their housing costs compared to 6 percent in Lithuania.

Free funds are most frequently used for home renovation, purchase of clothes, entertainment, loan and credit card payments, vacationing and purchase of household appliances.

CULTURAL NEWS

Estonian Movie Picked up Two Awards at Karlovy Vary

Jul 08 - The Estonian movie director Ilmar Raag's school drama "The Class" has picked up two awards at the Karlovy Vary film festival in the Czech Republic.

"The Class" won the special mention award in the East of the West program and the Europa Cinemas Label.

The festival that was held from June 29 through July 7 had 15 movies competing in the East of the West

program focusing on films from central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics.

The five-member jury gave two awards. The main award went to "Armin" from Croatia and special mention, to "The Class."

The jury of Europa Cinemas, a network of cinemas with a mainly European programming, awarded the movie Europa Cinemas Label as Best European film.

"The Class" will be distributed worldwide by NonStop Sales, a leading distributor in Nordic countries, for whom this will be the first movie from the Baltic region.

CONOMIC NEWS

Currency rates in kroons

(Bank of Estonia)

Estonian Government Agreed Principles of Income Tax Changes

Jul 05 - The Estonian government approved income tax-related changes to bring the country's taxation system into line with the European Union's parent-subsidiary directive and harmonize the taxation of private individuals' income from securities with that applied to companies.

Finance Minister Ivari Padar said that reinvested corporate profit will remain tax-exempt. The amendments in preparation would at the same time exclude double taxation of profit in different EU countries.

The Finance Minister said that by the government's decision Estonia will stop levying tax on profit at the time of its distribution and instead switch to taxation on an annual basis.

Reinvested corporate profit is to remain tax-exempt as before, but income tax will be payable once a year on distributed profit to which non-enterprise related expenses and funds disbursed in gifts and donations are added.

Experts Regard Soft Landing as Realistic Scenario for Estonian Economy

Jul 04 - A soft landing for Estonia's overheated economy is seen as a highly realistic scenario by 12 percent, rather realistic by 64 percent and rather unrealistic by 24 percent of experts interviewed by the Institute of Economic Research.

It appears from the June survey that in the experts' judgment the economic climate will stay favourable in the next six months. Market barometers indicate a slow cooling of the economy.

Domestic limitedness of the labour resource is seen as a serious problem.

In industry 39 percent of enterprises have more orders on their books than usual and 47 percent have the usual amount. The existing orders ensure production for 4.9 months compared to 4.5 months a year ago.

Estonian Economic Minister: Estonian Economic Situation is Becoming Normal Again

Jul 04 - The state of the Estonian economy is changing from abnormal to normal, the minister for economic affairs told at the presentation of

the six-month prognosis drawn up by the Institute of Economic Research.

"All that we have seen -- a real estate price hike, wage reforms and daring repurchase of the railway -- is the level of Azerbaijan, around 30 percent annual economic growth. We are reverting from abnormal to normal," Juhan Parts said.

"Unlike in March, we are feeling somewhat more insecure when it comes to a general evaluation of the economy," senior researcher Leev Kuum observed.

"We've actually seen a falling trend already over the past year and at present there are signs of both a slow cooling off of the economy and continued boom," Kuum said. "But compared to the crises of 1999 and 1992, our situation is significantly better."

Estonian Consumer Prices up 5.8 pct on Year in June

Jul 06 - Consumer prices in Estonia rose 5.8 percent in June compared to the same month a year ago, the Statistical Office reports.

Administratively regulated prices went up by 4.1 percent and non-administered prices, 6.4 percent year-on-year.

Food prices climbed 6.6 percent, manufactured goods 1.8 percent and services 9.4 percent.

The consumer price index was most affected by an increase in housing costs and the rise in food prices.

Month on month, goods and services were on the average 0.5 more expensive in June.

Baltic Energy Firms to Start Work on Ignalina Shareholders' Agreement

Jul 06 - Prime ministers of the Baltic States agreed in Vilnius that energy companies of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland will start drafting shareholders' agreements for the new nuclear power plant to be built at Ignalina, Lithuania.

Lithuania will next week send its partners a formal invitation to participate in the project as well as a preliminary draft of the shareholders' agreement.

Ansip expressed the hope that the four countries' power companies will conclude the shareholders' agreement before the end of this year.

Firm protection of the interests of minority shareholders participating in the project is one of the things for which the shareholders' agreement must make provision. Certain decisions in the company to be set up to implement the project must be made on a consensual basis.

H1 Electricity Exports via Estlink Cable Total 850 GWh

Jul 06 - In the first half of this year 850 gigawatt-hours of electric power moved towards Nordic countries and 13 GWh towards the Baltic States via the Estlink undersea cable linking the Nordic and Baltic electricity systems.

Electricity export via the cable was 557.6 GWh in the first quarter of this year.

The Estlink cable has in the first six months of operation proven its necessity to Eesti Energia (Estonian Energy), director of the national power utility's energy trade arm Jaanus Arukaevu said.

"Even if prices on the Scandinavian market in the first half of this year have been lower than forecast, Estlink has in its first few months of operation made a significant contribution to Eesti Energia's economic results," Arukaevu said

Estonian Patent Office Registers 1,350 Trademarks in H1

Jul 09 - The Patent Office registered 1,350 international trademarks in Estonia in the first six months of 2007, 63 more than during the same period a year ago.

Estonian entrepreneurs filed 813 applications for the registration of a trademark, while applications for the international registration of a trademark numbered 48, figures released by the Patent Office show.

Russia Resumed Coal Shipments via Estonia

Jul 03 - The shipment of Russian coal via Estonia that broke off in May has resumed and in the first two days of July 165 cars of coal arrived here, Eesti Raudtee (Estonian Railway) reports.

In addition, 68 cars of coal dispatched from Kazakhstan have arrived in Estonia, Eesti Raudtee spokesman Urmas Glase said.

Estonian Garment Maker Baltika's H1 Sales up 37 pct

Jul 03 - Sales revenue of the Estonian fashion group Baltika reached 536 million kroons (EUR 34.25mln) in the first half of this year, an increase of 37 percent compared to the same period a year before.

The group's six-month retail sales added up to 447 million kroons (year-on-year growth of 42 percent) and wholesale revenue totalled 77 million kroons (up 13 percent), Baltika said today.

Consolidated sales revenue in June, at 85.5 million kroons, was 32 percent bigger than in June 2006.

H1 Sales Volume of Estonia's A. Le Coq Beverage House up 11 pct

Jul 09 - The total sales volume of Estonia's largest beverage producer A. Le Coq in the first six months of this year grew 11 percent over the same period last year to reach 69 million litres.

Exports soared 24 percent in the same period to 11.2 million litres, the company announced.

2006 Net Earnings by Estonian Operation of Ericsson up 39 pct

Jul 09 - Ericsson Eesti, the Estonian operation of Ericsson engaging in the sale and service of communications systems and planning of telecommunications networks, made a net profit of 5.5 million kroons (EUR 0.35mln) in 2006.

The figure marks an increase of 39 percent over the preceding year.

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ISLANDI VÄLJAK 1, TALLINN, ESTONIA 15049

TEL +372 637 7600

FAX +372 637 7617

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To subscribe, please contact: vm@vm.ee