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FOREIGN NEWS



Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and European Commissioner on Enlargement Olli Rehn in Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 November.

Foreign Minister Paet Met with European Commissioner on Enlargement Olli Rehn

Nov 9 - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with European Commissioner on Enlargement Olli Rehn on 9th November in Tallinn.

Further enlargement of the European Union and cooperation with aspiring countries were discussed. Commissioner Rehn thanked Estonia for supporting the enlargement process, and said that Estonia's support is highly valued. Rehn also emphasized that Estonia is a positive example of EU enlargement.

Paet expressed hope that Croatia will become the 28th EU member state within this decade. „Croatia has been successful in implementing the necessary reforms,” Paet said.

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FOREIGN NEWS

Paet: Adapting to Climate Change Requires the Solidarity of Nations

Nov 8 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet participated in a round table discussion on 8 November, as part of the European Development Days occurring in Lisbon. The discussion focused on themes related to poverty, human settlements, and migration.

Foreign Minister Paet recognised that the effects of climate change are not contained by national borders. “Global warming has already made earning a livelihood difficult in many nations,” said Paet. “This, in turn, may bring about migration, instability, and even conflicts in extreme cases,” he added.

The Estonian foreign minister also noted that adapting to climate change requires the solidarity of nations. “Impoverished nations can better come to terms with climate change with the help of developed nations,” Paet said. “To achieve lasting results, developed nations and developing countries must coordinate their efforts more efficiently,” he emphasized.

According to Foreign Minister Paet, Estonia wishes to see more open economic co-operation between the European Union and third countries, as well as more intensive trade relations. “Advancements in trade directly help improve economic prosperity in developing nations, which results in less migration,” said Paet. The Estonian foreign minister added that the aid given to developing nations must be used effectively within those nations, which assumes that good government will also develop in receiving nations.

FOREIGN NEWS

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The foreign minister also suggested that membership talks should continue with Turkey as soon as possible, since the parliamentary and presidential elections in the country have now passed. „We are convinced that chapters that are technically ready should be opened for talks,” Paet added.

Regarding Serbia, Paet considers it important that Serbia stays on its course toward the EU. The Foreign Minister also emphasized that the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) should be signed with Serbia. The prerequisite for signing the agreement is Serbia’s full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Talking about the events in Georgia, Rehn and Paet said that the Georgian authorities must find a peaceful and democratic solution to the present crisis. Paet said the Georgian president's decision to arrange presidential elections was a step in the direction of bringing back peace.

During his visit to Tallinn, Rehn met with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and the European Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu. Olli Rehn and Urmass Paet also participated in a roundtable discussion on the future of Europe that took place in the Representation of the European Commission.

Foreign Minister Considers EU Visa Facilitation for Moldova Very Important

Nov 13 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmass Paet expressed his pleasure over the European Parliament’s decision on visa facilitation for Moldova. The Parliament accepted a simplified and less expensive visa process for Moldovan citizens to get visas for travel to EU member states.

According to Foreign Minister Paet, Estonia supports Moldova’s intensifying ties with the EU. “The visa facilitation agreement is an important signal to Moldova as it moves towards the European Union,” said Foreign Minister Paet. “Direct contacts between individuals are important for both political and economic relations,” he added.

The Estonian foreign minister finds it crucial that the visa facilitation process continues for other nations involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy. “Therefore it’s important that visa facilitation discussions will be initiated with Georgia,” Paet added.

Last week, the Council of the European Union approved visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the Western Balkan nations of Albania, Bosnia-Hertzevovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The agreements should come into force in the beginning of 2008.

Estonia to Provide Training to Young Diplomats from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia

Nov 10 - The Estonian School of Diplomacy is going to host a training course for young

diplomats and civil servants from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia this month.

The course will offer participants the opportunity to learn from Estonia's experience in accession to the European Union and NATO and get familiar with Estonia's state institutions, the Defence Forces’ Tapa training base, and the EuroCollege of Tartu University.

The Estonian School of Diplomacy has carried out projects aimed at Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in collaboration with the Estonian Foreign Ministry since 2003.

The projects involve training courses lasting a couple of weeks, scholarship programs and academic visits by teaching staff.

15 young diplomats and civil servants from Moldova and Georgia as well as seven students from the Ukrainian Academy of Diplomacy will take part in the upcoming program.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Ilves Underlines Importance of Students in War of Independence

Nov 13 - Speaking on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the opening of a monument to high school students who fell in the Estonian War of Independence, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves underlined the great importance of student soldiers in the war.



He said that the monument marked the contribution of those young men, high school students, who formed volunteer units together with Estonian officers of the former tsarist army, and who were the first to counter the vigorously advancing Red Army.

Ilves said that the equipment of the young men, and even girls, was poor. "There were next to no uniforms, the weapons were often old Russian or Japanese rifles and the so-called armoured trains of plywood and sand on which the students went to fight the Red Army had been built by the students themselves."

The president underlined that in historians' opinion, the contribution of these school-leavers was decisive. "They say the Republic of Estonia may not have been born if high school and university students had not taken up arms and decisively risked their lives in the name of Estonia's independence," the President added.

The president pointed out that about 2,000 Crosses of Liberty were conferred on Estonian citizens and high school students received 600 and university students 150 of them.

The monument to the fallen students at the Tallinn Science High School was opened on November 13, 1927. The monument was destroyed during the Soviet occupation in 1944. It was restored in 1993 on the basis of photographs of the earlier sculpture in a joint effort of the sculptors Vambola Mets and Arseni Mölder.

DEFENCE NEWS

Estonia and Sweden Ready to Continue Cooperation in Battle Groups

Nov 9 - **The defence ministers of Estonia and Sweden on Friday expressed the readiness of the two countries to continue cooperation in EU battle groups in the future.**

Estonian Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo and his Swedish counterpart Sten Tolgfors voiced appreciation of the cooperation that the parties engaged in the formation of the EU Nordic Battle Group, and expressed readiness to continue that cooperation beyond 2008.

The ministers had in mind the battle group that must be ready to take part in operations in 2011.

Aaviksoo and Tolgfors also spoke at some length about cooperation between the European Union and NATO, the future and reforms of the NATO Response Force, and the military operations under way.

Tolgfors offered an overview of developments in Sweden's defence policy, stressing changes in procurement policy and attachment of greater importance to participation in international operations.

The ministers also talked about relations with Russia. In that regard the ministers viewed cooperation and dialogue as very important, but considered a more resolute and powerful stance of the EU necessary as well.

Cooperation between international information security networks was considered extremely important. As examples of cooperation, they cited assistance by Swedish experts in the successful repelling of the coordinated cyber attacks against Estonia this spring, and exchange of experience with Swedish experts in the drawing up of Estonia's strategy on cyber security.

Aaviksoo said that as the views of the two countries on existing and new risks are very similar, constant exchanges of experience are necessary and at the same time easy.

Ukraine and Estonia Discussed Bilateral Defence Cooperation

Nov 13 - **Representatives of the Ukrainian and Estonian defence ministries Tuesday in Tallinn discussed defence cooperation between the two countries, with Estonia confirming continued support of Ukrainian defence policy reforms.**

Estonia's wish in defence cooperation with Ukraine is to focus on concrete spheres in development in which Ukraine is interested and in which Estonia can offer assistance, a spokesman for the Defence Ministry said.

The aim of Tuesday's talks was to discuss the defence policy situation of both countries and confirm Estonia's continued support of Ukrainian defence reform processes.

Estonia contributes to the implementation of Ukrainian security and defence reforms bilaterally, in the framework of Nordic and Baltic cooperation and of NATO.

Head of the Ukrainian delegation, Deputy Defence Minister Valeri Ivashenko, said Ukraine could offer Estonia its experience, mentioning cooperation in the strategic air transport sphere as one potential area.

In addition, the meeting between Estonian and Ukrainian Defence Ministers addressed participation

in military missions and Ukraine's cooperation with NATO and the European Union. Ukrainian colleagues thanked Estonia for support given to three Ukrainian students attending Baltic Defence College courses next year.

In the course of the visit the Ukrainian defence Ministry officials were shown the defence forces communications and information systems training and development centre and the NATO cyber defence competence centre to be created on its basis.

Seven States Wish to Participate in NATO Centre for Cyber Defence in Estonia

Nov 12 - **Seven countries so far have expressed interest to participate in the work of the NATO Centre of Excellence in Cooperative Cyber Defence to be set up in Estonia.**

According to the Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo these countries are the United States, Spain, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland, spokespeople for the Estonian General Staff told BNS.

"Estonia has drafted two cooperation agreements, one of which will be signed between the countries that have expressed interest to take part in the NATO Centre of Excellence in Cooperative Cyber Defence and the other between NATO as an organization and the countries taking part in the centre of excellence," Aaviksoo said.

In January 2008, a final discussion of the texts of the agreements involving all the participating countries will take place, the minister added.

After the cooperation agreements have been signed, military personnel and experts from other NATO member states will also serve at the centre for cyber defence in Estonia.

The creation of a centre of excellence in cyber defence became especially urgent after the cyber attacks against Estonia this spring.

The proposal to establish a NATO Centre of Excellence in Cooperative Cyber Defence was made by Estonia back in 2004.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Currency rates in kroons:

http://www.eestipank.info/dynamic/erp/erp_en.jsp

(Bank of Estonia)

Tallink Expects net Profit to Grow by Quarter in New Financial Year

Nov 13 - **The Estonian shipping group AS Tallink expects its net profit in the financial year starting September to reach 1.33 billion kroons (EUR 85 mln), an increase of 26.6 percent over the profit of 1.05 billion kroons earned in the past financial year.**

Sales in the new financial year are forecast to total 12.75 billion kroons and EBITDA 3.05 billion kroons, the company told the Tallinn stock exchange.

"The development will probably not be so fast in the first half of the financial year. Higher growth is expected in the second half of the financial year when the new booking system is fully functional, changes are made in the fleet and the synergies from the Silja integration will become more

noticeable," Tallink said in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

Tallink finished the financial year 2006/2007 with a net profit of 1.05 billion kroons. Sales increased 88 percent year on year to nearly 12 billion kroons, according to preliminary figures.

Tallinna Kaubamaja Sees Nine-Month Profit Soar 60 Percent on Year

Nov 12 - Net profit of the Estonian retail group Tallinna Kaubamaja in the first nine months of this year soared 60 percent year on year to 280 million kroons (EUR 17.9 mln).

Consolidated net sales increased by 41 percent, totalling 4.2 billion kroons, the group said today.

At the end of September the balance sheet of the Tallinna Kaubamaja group stood at 2.9 billion kroons. Assets and equity were up by respectively 54 percent and 30 percent compared to the same time a year ago.

Building Supplies Company Ehitus Service Plans to Expand to Foreign Markets

Nov 12 - The Estonian building and gardening supplies retailer Ehitus Service owned by the Swedish investment fund Askembla Asset Management operates from Saturday under the name Bauhof and is planning expansion to foreign markets.

The company is going to invest more than 100 million kroons in expanding and updating its sales network in Estonia and on foreign markets next year. Even bigger investments are planned for the next two years.

Managing director Mart Vau said the company has been working for a number of years with a view to international expansion and the preparations have reached the final phase, the company reports on its website.

The existing Ehitus Service stores will be rebranded within this year. The creation of the Bauhof brand cost eight million kroons (EUR 0.51 mln).

Ehitus Service last year earned a profit of 51 million kroons on sales of 803 million kroons.

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