

# Estonian Review

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

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## DOMESTIC NEWS

**President of the Republic Addressing the Inauguration Event of the 90th Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia Estonia Concert Hall, 28 November 2007 28.11.2007**



**Dear people of Estonia!  
Dear representatives of the people!**

**Today 90 years ago, the first democratically elected body of representatives in our history – the Provisional Land Council of the Estonian Province – declared itself the supreme power in Estonia. The historic meeting took place in the White Hall of the Toompea Castle in Tallinn.**

As we know, the meeting was brief. The Bolshevik coup, which had broken out in Russia a little earlier, had brought turbulence also to Estonia. Gangs of the so-called soldiers and workers were rioting in the streets of Tallinn. They succeeded in interfering with the work of the Land Council and dispersing it.

As a state abiding by the rule of law, Estonia has never lacked violent adversaries. A democratic state is by definition a reproach to those who are not equal to the time- and energy-consuming task of building up democracy and the rule of law.

Ladies and gentlemen.

After the declaration of the Land Council today 90 years ago, only a few steps remained to be taken to the sovereign statehood of Estonia. Still, the definite option for independence in February 1918 was eclipsed by the final tumult of World War I.

Late autumn the same year, the War of Freedom broke out and lasted till early 1920, finally bringing the people of Estonia the independence that had remained no more than a dream for previous generations.

Our state has been the guarantee of our continuity. Our state has enabled us to live in the Estonian language.

In the 20th century, we have proved twice – above all to ourselves, but also to the whole world – that a small independent nation can be successful. Very successful in fact.

Throughout the coming year, we will be celebrating the jubilee of our 90-years-old state. Celebrating as a state, with solemn dignity. Above all, we will be celebrating in our hearts, with our families, in our homes, villages and cities.

None of us knows – fortunately – what would have become of the people of Estonia, the Estonian language, our country and our culture, if our predecessors had not made use of the historic opportunity of Estonia's independence.

Yet we know what it meant for the people of Estonia to live under an alien, hostile, and undemocratic power. The tragedy of the loss of our statehood united us – in Estonia and all over the world – and gave us strength, in 1991, to recapture the freedom that we had been bereft of nearly half a century earlier.

We cherish our country. We love our country. We are proud of it. We carry Estonia in our hearts, and as Jaan Kaplinski has said:

We will be coming back one day

Coming back all of us.

The coming year is a year of celebration. We begin the celebration today. And close it on 28 November 2008, when the monument to War of Freedom is to be inaugurated at the heart of Tallinn.

At the same time, the coming year is full of ordinary, day-to-day work. In festivities, we must not forget to take care of ourselves and our statehood. The citizens' faith in our statehood and care for our state is what makes this country strong, and her future safe.

I wish you strength in all this, and declare open the year of the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia!

## FOREIGN NEWS

**Estonia Preparing To Chair Baltic Council of Ministers**

**Nov 22 - Estonia will assume chairmanship of the Baltic Council of Ministers next year.**

"Estonia's priorities for the period of chairmanship are cooperation in the field of information technology security and fight against cyber crimes," Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said.

It is also important to further intensify cooperation with other Baltic Sea countries, especially the Nordic countries, he said.

The Baltic Council of Ministers is a format of intergovernmental cooperation created in 1994. Chairmanship of the council is rotated every year. Lithuania chaired the council in 2006 and Latvia does it this year.

**Tallinn To Be Venue of Official Festivities of Schengen Enlargement**

**Nov 23 - One of the four official festivities to celebrate the enlargement of the Schengen area will take place in Tallinn on Dec. 21.**

The events at the Tallinn Passenger Port will be attended by European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates and the EU's justice, liberties and security commissioner Franco Frattini.

Of the four events, the Tallinn celebration will be of the most grand scale.

## FOREIGN NEWS

### Estonian FM Outlined the Priorities for the Estonian Presidency of the BCM in 2008

**Nov 23 - Addressing a meeting of the Baltic Council of Ministers (BCM) in Riga, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said that the Baltic states must find a solution as regards the arrangement of Baltic air policing beyond 2018.**

"We regard as especially important that progress could be made concerning the policing of our air space after the year 2018," Paet said in his outline of the priorities for the Estonian presidency of the BCM in 2008.

"Ten years is, of course, a seemingly long time, but the solving of such a complicated matter, which is linked to very large investments, requires serious analysis," he said.

Another matter in the defence and security realm that needs to be dealt with promptly is the preparing of BALTBAT-2 for participation in the NATO Response Force, NRF-14, the Estonian minister said.

"We also have to make joint decisions concerning the future of two cooperative institutions, which have already proven themselves by functioning quite efficiently. Namely, BALTDEFCOL, the Baltic Defence College, as well as the Baltic Naval Squadron, BALTRON," said Paet.

As the main topics for 2008, Paet named defence and security cooperation, creation of a common energy market, developing of Baltic road and rail infrastructure, cyber security, and protection of the Baltic Sea environment.

"From a security point of view it is no less important how we are able to solve our energy supply problems. In this respect, of primary importance is cooperation in developing a regional energy market, as well as in the sphere of ensuring the security of our energy infrastructure," he said.

Paet said that the ensuring of the reliability and security of both the production and supply of energy was a domain in which today also large countries were finding it hard to cope, as were even unions of nations.

Just as important as the joining of the power grids of the Baltic states with the common EU system is the continued development of both Via Baltica and Rail Baltica, which will ensure for the Baltic road and rail transport a connection with Central and Western Europe in conformity with contemporary standards and requirements, he said.

Paet also highlighted cooperation in the fight against cyber crime and in ensuring the security of the information technology space.

The BCM is presided over by Latvia in 2007 and had Lithuania as the presiding nation last year.

### Estonia's Trivimi Velliste Elected President of Baltic Assembly

**Nov 25 - The head of the Estonian delegation to the Baltic Assembly, Trivimi Velliste, was elected president of the interparliamentary forum at its 26th session in Riga.**

Velliste served as vice president of the assembly till now.

The Baltic Assembly decided that the next session will take place on Dec. 4-6, 2008 in Tallinn.

The key problems to be addressed in 2008 are Baltic energy cooperation, parliamentary cooperation with European Union's neighbouring countries and the fight against cyber crime, the lawmakers decided.

### Estonian PM Stresses Importance of EU's Further Enlargement

**Nov 27 - The visiting prime minister of Estonia told his Slovenian counterpart at a meeting that the enlargement of the European Union must continue and voiced the hope the Slovenian EU presidency beginning in January will contribute to this process.**

Andrus Ansip said it is the Balkans countries in particular that need a prospect for joining the bloc, spokesperson for the Estonian government reported.

In Ansip's words, Estonia's view is that it is vital for would-be members of the bloc to have a clear goal and prospect. "The doors of the European Union must be open," he said, voicing the hope that accession talks with Croatia will continue and progress will be made in talks with Turkey during the Slovenian presidency.

The priorities of the Slovenian EU presidency are continuation of the bloc's institutional reform, common energy policy and climate change, as well as the Lisbon strategy and West Balkans developments.

Speaking about the Lisbon strategy, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa said Estonia is a good example of increased research and development spending to achieve the goals outlined in the strategy. A discussion of the strategy's three-year cycle falls into the period of Slovenia's presidency and thus the Lisbon strategy will be the key topic ahead of the European Council in March.

The heads of government talked also about truck queues at the external borders of the bloc. In Jansa's words, lines of trucks waiting to be cleared for entry into Russia is a problem to be resolved jointly by the EU and Russia.

### PM: Estonia Will Switch to Euro at First Opportunity

**Nov 26 - Estonia aims to adopt the European common currency euro at the first opportunity or as soon as it meets all the requirements, the prime minister said.**

"We are continuing a stringent budget policy and will raise excise duties ahead of schedule. The rise in the fuel, tobacco and alcohol duties will in a couple of years reduce the state's impact on inflation," Andrus Ansip said in a meeting with Slovenian Finance Minister Andrej Bajuk and governor of the central bank Marko Kranjec in Ljubljana.

In Bajuk's words, Estonia lacks today better solutions whereby the government could speed up the implementation of this goal and fulfilment of the inflation criteria.

The parties talked about the Slovenian experience of joining the euro zone and the reasons

behind the acceleration of inflation this year.

The governor of the central bank and finance minister said Slovenia's entry into the euro zone proceeded smoothly.

Export has grown by 17 percent and competitiveness has markedly improved since then. The flip side of the coin is that inflation has risen above the Maastricht criteria.

### **President; Estonia, Hungary Are Very Strong Allies**

**Nov 21 - Meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said that similar foreign policy priorities, partnership in the European Union and NATO, along with the kinship of the two nations made Estonia and Hungary very strong allies.**

Ilves highlighted close cultural ties between the two countries and cooperation in education, in the framework of which Estonia and Hungary exchange students and university teachers, spokespeople for the Estonian president said.

The Estonian head of state and the prime minister of Hungary also spoke about developments in the European Union and in the union's neighbouring countries, energy and security policy, as well as cooperation in helping the Finno-Ugric peoples living in Russia.

"I'm glad that Estonia and Hungary underline similar aspects as regards the European Union's reform treaty: more effective working of the union, closer integration within the union, better cooperation in foreign affairs," Ilves said.

Ilves observed that trade between the two countries, which is not very active now, is showing an upward tendency and Estonian entrepreneurs are viewing Hungary as a market with good prospects and competitive edge in Central Europe.

### **Speaker, Hungarian PM Focus on Energy**

**Nov 21 - Speaker of the Estonian parliament Ene Ergma and Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany at their meeting in Tallinn mainly dealt with the European Union's common energy policy and cooperation in the search for alternative sources of energy.**

Ergma underlined the importance of shaping a common EU foreign and security policy and the close link between these and numerous other challenges that the union is faced with, spokespeople for the Estonian parliament said.

Gyurcsany offered an overview of the situation in Hungary and the country's positions as regards the Nabucco project, which should bring natural gas from the Middle East and Central Asia to Europe via Turkey. He said that Hungary remains open to all alternatives as regards the country's energy supply.

The parliamentary speaker and the Hungarian head of government also exchanged thoughts about the outlooks of Kosovo.

### **Estonia, Hungary Plead to Help Kindred Peoples More in the Future**

**Nov 21 - Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and his Hungarian counterpart Ferenc Gyurcsany stated that in the future the two countries wish to help the kindred Finno-Ugric**

**peoples living in Russia more than they've been doing so far.**

Ansip, who opened the press conference of the two prime ministers in Tallinn with a greeting in Hungarian, praised relations between the two countries and said that due to the kinship of the nations the positions of Estonia and Hungary were mutually understandable or even overlapped with the positions of the other party.

Ansip expressed regret that economic relations between Estonia and Hungary were not as strong as their political and cultural ties.

At the meeting, assistance to kindred peoples was talked about aside from bilateral relations, matters related to the EU, and Russia. Ansip said that Estonia and Hungary wish to do more in the future to help the kindred peoples living in Russia. He also said helping of those peoples was a duty of Estonia, Hungary and Finland.

As Gyurcsany said, Hungary intends to create a virtual network between Finno-Ugric universities along with a program of scholarships and exchanges so that the smaller Finno-Ugric languages would not only survive but also continue to develop.

Dealing with energy policy, the Hungarian head of government underlined that the EU needs a common energy policy and that Hungary supports all alternative projects concerning energy.

Hungary intends to switch to electronic handling of people's interaction with the government and Estonia is an example for Hungary in that field, said Gyurcsany.

In the course of the visit the Hungarian head of government is also to

### **Estonian FM: Estonia, Finland Must Support Other Finno-Ugric Peoples**

**Nov 27 - Estonia and Finland must support other Finno-Ugric peoples, Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said during a visit to Finland.**

President Tarja Halonen and Paet spoke at the meeting in Helsinki about preparations for the 5th world congress of Finno-Ugric peoples to be held in Khanty-Mansiisk, Russia next year, agreeing on the importance of cooperation among three European Union nations -- Estonia, Finland and Hungary

-- to assist kindred peoples in Russia.

"Estonia, Finland and Hungary must render all-round assistance to kindred peoples in Russia for their identity and culture to survive," Paet stressed.

Halonen and Paet discussed also bilateral relations, including events to mark the approaching anniversaries of both countries.

Developments within the European Union were in focus at the minister's meeting with the speaker of the parliament, Sauli Niinisto. Both parties affirmed readiness to ratify the reform treaty in the first half of next year.

Under discussion were also the Finnish defence and security policy report due in 2008 and the EU's relations with NATO.

Paet and his Finnish colleague Ilkka Kanerva spoke at some length about energy cooperation. Both noted the necessity of developing a common Nordic and Baltic energy market to create an internal energy market.

"We deem it necessary to push ahead with the Estlink-2 project and build other power links in

this (Baltic Sea) region, too, for instance between Lithuania and Poland,"

Paet said. "We are also interested in Finnish plans for a new nuclear power plant."

Both ministers underscored the importance of a Baltic Sea strategy of the EU and hailed the topic's coming into the bloc's sphere of interest, as all member nations would benefit from it.

Paet and Kanerva expressed concern about the state of talks over Kosovo's status, emphasizing the importance of EU unity in this issue.

Other topics discussed in the meeting were the situation in Afghanistan and EU-Russia relations, including the problem of traffic jams at Russian borders.

The ministers said they hope Russia will modernize its customs and transit procedures.

Regarding bilateral relations, the ministers discussed cooperation in visa issuance in countries where one or the other has no diplomatic representation.

According to Kanerva, Finland is making a list of countries in which it is prepared to act for Estonia.

Estonia is ready to represent Finland in Tbilisi, Minsk and Pskov, Russia.

The ministers were pleased with the success of a diplomats' exchange program and agreed to extend it.

Paet underlined the necessity of establishing an Estonian school in the Helsinki area. "There are tens of thousands of Estonians in Finland, plans are to establish a school for them in 2009," he said.

The Finnish minister, too, said it was important to set up an Estonian school.

Paet wished success to the Finnish presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe next year and voiced support for Finland's priorities.

### **Estonian FM: Best Performers Among Neighbourhood Policy Target Countries Deserve More**

**Nov 23 - The more successful of the target nations of the European Neighbourhood Policy deserve more opportunities for cooperation, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said.**

In his remarks at a conference on the Neighbourhood Policy in Riga, Paet said that Estonia supports enlargement of the European Union that is based on common values.

He said that those countries which have set membership of the EU as their goal must also be provided with a concrete framework for fulfilling that goal.

Paet described individual approach to the target countries as important.

"To the more successful of the Neighbourhood Policy target countries more possibilities for cooperation should be offered: extension of the four freedoms -- free movement of goods, services, labour and capital -- closer economic cooperation, and visa facilitation," he said.

Estonia backs the creation of the Neighbourhood Investment Fund and is prepared to take part in it, said Paet.

The creation of the Neighbourhood Investment Fund has been one of the Commission's main initiatives for strengthening of the Neighbourhood Policy since 2006 and its

establishment would enable to invest more in the Neighbourhood Policy target countries.

### **Estonia Will Be Issuing Visas Also in Moldova**

**Nov 21 - In the near future Estonia will start issuing visas also in Moldova, in line with an agreement on consular cooperation signed by Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and the permanent secretary of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Laszlo Szoke.**

Under the agreement Estonia will participate in the work of a common EU visa centre in the Moldovan capital Chisinau, which was set up by Hungary, Slovenia, Austria and Latvia earlier this year.

Within the framework of the project the consular representatives of several countries will use common premises and personnel to issue visas.

The goal is to improve the availability of visas in Moldova, where most countries of the Schengen area do not have a representation of their own at this point.

"Since Moldova is for us an important target country in development cooperation, we hope that our ties with that country will intensify further," the Estonian minister said.

The visa centre will also make consular assistance and services better available for Estonian citizens in Moldova.

### **Estonia Allows One Day of Advance Voting in Russian Elections**

**Nov 22 - Estonia has satisfied a request from Russia to allow advance voting in the elections to the Duma lower house of Russian parliament in the Estonian territory.**

The Russian embassy had asked permission to hold advance voting so that Russian citizens could cast their ballots in Estonia also on Dec. 1, one day ahead of the election day.

"The Foreign Ministry issued its consent proceeding from Estonia's own practice of holding an advance vote," the spokesperson said.

Spokespeople for the Russian embassy said the request was made because the number of eligible voters for each polling station in Estonia was several times higher than the norm applied in Russia, or about 12,000 voters per polling station compared to the Russian norm of 3,000 voters per station.

Nine polling stations will be opened in the Russian elections in Estonia, including four in Tallinn and Narva each and one in the southern city of Tartu.

The Russian embassy intends to bring voters to polling stations by bus from several other locations on Dec. 2. Buses chartered by the embassy are to make six trips from Pärnu, two from Paldiski, and one from Valga and Viljandi each.

At the time of the last Duma elections in Russia, 107,000 Russian citizens eligible to vote lived in Estonia, less than 17 percent of them, came to vote.

### **Estonia, Other EU Countries Don't Back UN Resolution Initiated by Russia**

**Nov 22 - Estonia and other members of the European Union did not back a United Nations**

## **resolution on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.**

The decision of the EU arose from the fact that the resolution was in an unfortunate manner overburdened with things not related to the above-mentioned phenomena.

"At the same time, Estonia together with other European Union member states unequivocally condemns racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia," the spokesperson said.

The resolution initiated by Russia was co-sponsored by Belarus, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela, South Africa, Angola, Benin, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Cabo-Verde, Namibia, Ethiopia and Sudan.

In the vote the resolution was supported by 122 countries, 52 countries abstained and the United States was against.

## **Estonia's Ambassador to Bulgaria Presents Credentials**

**Nov 23 - Rein Oidekivi, the first ever Estonian ambassador to reside in Sofia, presented his credentials to Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov.**

During the conversation that followed, Parvanov voiced his recognition of the relationship of allies of Estonia and Bulgaria in the European Union and NATO and also hailed the possibilities for further development of the relations arising from the appointment of a resident Estonian ambassador.

Oidekivi said he was glad that partnership in the EU and NATO had brought intensity into bilateral relations and broadened the areas of cooperation.

The ambassador said that Bulgaria had a special role in carrying out the European Neighbourhood Policy in both the Black Sea area as well as in the Western Balkans.

Parvanov said that economic relations between the two countries should develop more actively than they have been doing so far.

"The plans of Estonian investors in Bulgaria are long-term and serious," the Estonian envoy said.

Oidekivi, an Estonian philology graduate from Tartu University of 1990, was born on March 7, 1965 on Muhu Island.

Oidekivi has been in diplomatic work since 1992 when he entered the service at the Foreign Ministry press and information department.

In 1995-1998 Oidekivi worked as charge d'affaires ad interim at the Estonian embassy in Kiev. After that, until his appointment as ambassador to Lithuania in 2000, he served as director of the Foreign Ministry's political office.

Since 2005 Oidekivi is director general of the Foreign Ministry press and information department.

From the same year he was also the Estonian ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina residing in Tallinn.

## **Border Crossing Queues Relatively Short**

**Nov 24 - The lines of vehicles waiting to cross the border from Estonia to Russia remain relatively short, the wait being the longest at Narva where it will take truckers more than a day to get across.**

Compared with the peak season the queues to cross the border are relatively short. So last August and November there were more than 500 vehicles standing in line at Narva.

In Finland and Latvia the border crossing queues are much longer, with sometimes more than a thousand trucks in line at one checkpoint.

## **DEFENCE NEWS**

### **Estonia, Germany Sign Agreement on Status of Armed Forces**

**Nov 21 - Estonia and Germany signed an agreement which regulates the status of their armed forces in host nation's territory.**

The agreement was signed in Tallinn by Christian Schmidt, parliamentary state secretary of the German Defence Ministry, and Lauri Almann, secretary general of the Estonian Defence Ministry.

The agreement regulates in greater detail the status of Estonian and German defence forces during their stay in host nation territory. It deals with a variety of topics such as jurisdiction, requirements, logistics, arrangement of joint exercises, and environmental protection.

The agreement is complementary to the provisions of the agreement regulating the status of the armed forces of NATO countries.

"The agreement is extremely important to ensure smooth proceeding and facilitation of defence cooperation between Estonia and Germany," Almann said, adding that the document provides further support to the existing broad-based cooperation between the two countries.

Schmidt and Almann also spoke about the main topics to be dealt with at the upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest, continuation of the NATO missions, cyber security and bilateral defence cooperation.

Defence cooperation between Estonia and Germany in recent years has been related primarily to the development of the Baltic Command and Control Information System (BCCIS), the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL), establishment of the centre for cyber defence, and procurements.

### **Estonian Platoon Finds Numerous Arms Caches in Iraq**

**Nov 21 - Members of ESTPLA-15, the Estonian infantry platoon serving in Iraq, discovered a number of arms caches of insurgents near the city of Saab al Bor.**

During a search operation Estonian soldiers found caches of hidden weapons in an open pit main near a destroyed former arms depot of the Saddam era and in the surrounding village.

The cache contained 49 units of OG-9 anti-infantry projectiles together with rocket motors, 15 units of RPG-7 anti-tank grenades, 14 units of RPG-9 anti-tank grenades, five self-made explosive devices made from 125-millimeter tank shells, a South African-made 155-millimeter shell, about 80 kilograms of TNT, a 60-millimeter mortar shell, a 57-millimeter shell, two boxes of machine gun ammunition and about a hundred rounds of ammunition for heavy machine-guns.

The most significant item of that find was an AT-2 anti-tank missile complex complete with a missile in full operating condition, as well as seven Strela ground-to-air missiles. The ground-to-air missiles were in properly sealed containers and ready for use.

"The biggest asset and outcome of our activity is that we've probably prevented many attacks against allied forces and saved a lot of

hardware and a number of human lives," said the commander of ESTPLA-15, Lt. Kaido Kivistik. He added that all the caches were discovered in the course of routine patrolling.

In addition to the large discovery from this week the platoon has uncovered a number of skilfully concealed smaller arms caches in recent weeks.

Nine 120-millimeter mortar shells were found in a cache in a palm grove, while an abandoned poultry farm and its close surroundings hid an RPG-7 anti-tank grenade launcher properly stored and in full operating condition, a Kalashnikov machine-gun, two anti-tank grenades and two light grenades for RPG, 4,000 rounds of ammunition for the Kalashnikov machine-gun, a dozen 57-millimeter shells, four 60-millimeter shells and two 82-millimeter shells.

In other hiding places numerous RPG-7 anti-tank grenade launchers with scores of grenades, AK-47 rifles, hand grenades, detonators, cables and communication equipment frequently used in self-made explosive devices, shells and mortar shells, as well as rounds of gun ammunition were found.

The Estonian light infantry platoon ESTPLA-15 serves as part of the Iron Horse battle group of the 1st Brigade of the US 1st Cavalry Division. A mortar unit of the US army has been subordinated to the Estonian platoon.

### NATO Fighters Perform Training Flight Over Tallinn

**Nov 26 - Two Portuguese fighters policing the airspace of the Baltic states performed a training flight over the Estonian capital Tallinn.**

The F-16 aircraft from Portugal trained approach to the Tallinn airport at noon, the General Staff said. The fighters did not land in Tallinn.

The Portuguese Air Force took over the guarding of Baltic skies from Romania at the end of October.

### Estonia Backs Albania's NATO Aspirations

**Nov 23 - Estonia supports the endeavours of Albania to become a member of NATO, Estonia's Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo said.**

During Aaviksoo's meetings with Albania's Prime Minister Sali Berisha and Defence Minister Fatmir Mediu the security of the Balkans region, defence reforms in Albania and its NATO-related activity, as well as bilateral defence cooperation were talked about.

The Estonian defence minister and the prime minister of Albania spoke about the upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest, from which Albania, Croatia and Macedonia are awaiting an invitation to join the alliance. Also dealt with was the security situation in the Balkans and NATO-EU cooperation in the region, future of missions and possibilities for bilateral cooperation, spokespeople for the Estonian Defence Ministry said.

Aaviksoo confirmed Estonia's support for the NATO membership aspirations of Albania.

"The experience of Estonia shows that the accession of a country to NATO cannot be a goal in itself but has to be part of a longer process of transformation. Work has to be done all the time," Aaviksoo said.

Speaking about the situation in Kosovo, both sides said that it is of primary importance to

maintain regional stability and ensure a peaceful future for Kosovo.

Aaviksoo made the Albanian prime minister an invitation on behalf of the Estonian government to visit Estonia.

The defence minister of Albania, Fatmir Mediu, presented to Aaviksoo the defence reforms under way in Albania, and expressed interest in Estonia's experience of accession to NATO, particularly in a cooperation framework similar to the US-Baltic Charter. He also inquired about the arrangement of air policing on the basis of Baltic regional cooperation, and cyber security.

Aaviksoo said that cooperation between Estonia and Albania has very good prospects. He described it as pleasant that Albania values Adriatic-Baltic cooperation so highly and added that Albania's integration with NATO would improve both global and regional stability and security.

### Estonia Appoints Team for Three-Way Talks on Airspace Violations

**Nov 27 - The chief of the Air Force and the commander of the air surveillance division are going to represent Estonia at the upcoming talks over airspace violations with Finland and Russia.**

Air Force chief Col. Valeri Saar and the head of the air surveillance division, Maj. Mart Vendla, have been appointed to the Estonian delegation at the three-way talks beginning in Finland on Wednesday.

The talks will be conducted at military experts' level.

Estonia was invited to take part in the talks by Finland. Finland received the proposal for such talks from Russia.

### President Appoints Schvede Commander of Estonian Navy

**Nov 21 - President Toomas Hendrik Ilves signed a decision to appoint Cmdr Igor Schvede as commander of the Estonian Navy.**

Schvede previously headed the Estonian Navy in the capacity of acting commander.

Born in Prague on Dec. 5, 1970, Schvede has been trained at the Nakhimov naval school in Leningrad and at the Frunze naval school in the same city. He has also studied at the language institute of the US Department of Defence, at the US naval staff school in Newport and at the Baltic Defence College.

Schvede has served in different positions in the Estonian defence forces since 1993, including as commander of the mine countermeasures division, as chief of staff and as commander of the joint Baltic naval squadron BALTRON, and as staff officer at the headquarters of the NATO naval component in Northwood.

## DOMESTIC NEWS

### President: Comparison with Finland Helped Estonia Make Fast Progress

**Nov 22 - Speaking at an event to mark the upcoming anniversary of the Republic of Finland, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said that constant comparison with Finland has helped Estonia develop rapidly.**

"We are like twin brothers, who after years of separation are together again, going after their own and after common business," the president said in his remarks at the festive meeting in the Town Hall of Tallinn to mark the 90th anniversary of the Republic of Finland, the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Estonian-Finnish cultural agreement and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Friedebert Tuglas Society for Estonian-Finnish cultural relations.

Ilves said that at the time when Estonia was occupied a relationship with Estonia and Estonians, as well as support for the Estonian national culture, represented for many Finns a form of resistance to Soviet pressure.

For Estonians the development and steadfastness of Finland kept alive the will to create the Estonian state anew, and the idea of Estonia's independence reflected back from Finland's independence, the president said.

He said it was largely due to this that the people of Estonia were extremely demanding toward their leaders and politicians.

This kind of discontent, which takes one forward, comparison with Finland, has allowed Estonia to build up the state and the economy so fast, said Ilves.

### President: Estonia Needs Institute of Memory to Look Into Recent History

**Nov 23 - Estonia needs a brand new institution to research and write down the country's recent history systematically and without bias, and for that purpose an Institute of Memory is being established, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said.**

"I'm pleased to announce that in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice we are due very soon to call into being an Estonian Institute of Memory, the mission of which will be to write down what happened in the recent past, to explain and analyze it," Ilves said at a conference hosted by the Estonian National Archive.

All this can be done only by an academic research institution, he said.

The key phrase for the institute will be "sine ira et studio," or "without bitterness or partiality."

Quoting an almost 2,000-year-old passage from Tacitus, the president said: "The histories of Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero, while they were in power, were falsified through terror, and after their death were written under the irritation of a recent hatred. Hence my purpose is to relate a few facts about Augustus -- more particularly his last acts, then the reign of Tiberius, and all which follows, without either bitterness or partiality."

The president said that we owe ourselves and all future generations a truthful rendering of our past.

"So that it became and remained clear for us what happened here, what was done to the Estonian people, and who and how did it," he said. "So that our grandchildren would never have to ask that legendary question about mass deportations that is attributed to Swedes: "But why didn't anybody call the police?""

The task of the institute would be to systematically write down what is known to us, to do it as thoroughly as was done by the Commission for

the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity created by former President Lennart Meri.

"There is a lot more of that material, many of those who suffered under Communism, just as the persecutors, are alive," the president said. "Let's leave everyone the possibility to ask an explain, and not in the newspapers, but in front of academic experts," he said.

This of course will be strictly voluntary, because no commission can take upon itself the functions of a court.

To remain silent is a constitutional right that applies to everyone, just like freedom of expression, said the president.

### Web Rumor Triggered Kroon Selling Panic Among Estonia's Russian-Speakers

**Nov 26 - A rumour about the imminent devaluation of Estonia's national currency kroon spreading in the Russian-speaking Internet environment triggered panic selling of the kroon among Estonia's Russian-**

According to the fake report, "the Estonian government decided to lower the exchange rate of the kroon.

The Bank of Estonia refuted all rumours of the alleged devaluation of the kroon. The present exchange rate of the kroon against the euro, 15.6466, will stand until the adoption of the European common currency, the central bank said.

The bank also urged people not to credit and be swayed by false reports. "All the kroons in circulation are guaranteed by foreign currency reserves of the Bank of Estonia and all the kroons can be exchanged for the euro if necessary," the central bank added.

### Government Sets Out Order of Subjects for Switch to Teaching in Estonian

**Nov 22 - The government has endorsed amendments to the national syllabus determining the order in which the transition to teaching in Estonian must take place in different subjects in Russian-medium high schools until the academic year 2011/2012.**

The amended syllabus names civic studies and music as subjects of choice for the academic year 2008/2009, of which the schools can choose one, Minister of Education and Science Tõnis Lukas said.

Estonian literature became the first mandatory subject taught in Estonian in Russian-language high schools in Estonia starting from this autumn.

### Estonia Drops Four Places in UN Human Development Ranking

**Nov 27 - Estonia ranks 44th of 177 world countries in the newly-released human development scoreboard of the UN Development Program, four places lower than last year.**

Estonia placed 40th in the 2006 Human Development Index, 38th in 2005 and 36th in 2004.

In 2003 Estonia was in 41st and in 2002, in 42nd position.

Estonia ranks among countries of high human development which include the top 70 countries on the list.

Of neighbouring countries, Lithuania placed ahead of Estonia in 43rd and Latvia right behind in 45th.

Finland ranks 11th and Russia 67th.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

### Estonia's 2008 Budget Crosses Second Hurdle in Parliament

**Nov 21 - Estonian lawmakers completed the second reading of the 2008 state budget.**

A total of 51 amendments was put to the vote in the house. Most of them were initiated by the opposition and were turned down.

Further amendments can be lodged till Nov. 27.

The 2008 state budget bill projects revenues at 96.3 billion kroons (EUR 6.15 b) and expenditures at 93.6 billion kroons. The budget volume is up by 18.8 billion kroons or 25.17 percent from the present year.

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### Estonia Set Up A Commission for Accession Talks with OECD

**Nov 22 - The Estonian government set up a commission for accession talks with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.**

Estonia and its Baltic neighbours Latvia and Lithuania first sought entry into the OECD on Oct. 22, 1996.

This May the OECD Council at ministerial level approved the organization's enlargement strategy and decided to open accession talks with Chile, Estonia, Israel, Russia and Slovenia.

### Estonia's Trade Gap Narrows to EUR 236 Mln in September

**Nov 26 - Estonia's foreign trade deficit totalled 3.7 billion kroons (EUR 236 mln) in September, down from four billion kroons in September 2006 and 3.8 billion kroons in August this year, the Statistical Office said.**

Estonia's foreign trade turnover was 23.3 billion kroons, according to the preliminary figures. This marks a reduction of seven percent from September a year ago and five percent in comparison with August 2007.

In September exports amounted to 9.8 billion kroons or 42 percent of foreign trade while imports made up 13.5 billion kroons or 58 percent of the total trade volume.

Exports were down eight percent from September 2006 and five percent lower than in

August this year. Imports saw a decline of seven percent in year-on-year terms and four percent month-on-month.

Exports to EU countries made up 78 percent and exports to CIS countries 13 percent of total exports in September.

The main countries of destination for exports were Finland (20 percent), Sweden (15 percent) and Latvia (13 percent).

Imports from the EU accounted for 82 percent and imports from CIS countries for 8 percent of all imports. Of imports, 17 percent came from Finland, 15 percent from Germany and 10 percent from Sweden.

### Gross Monthly Wage in Estonia Averages EUR 696 in Q3

**Nov 23 - Gross monthly pay of full-time and part-time employees in Estonia averaged 10,899 kroons (EUR 696) and the average hourly pay was 66.78 kroons in the third quarter of this year, the Statistical Office said.**

By months, the average was 10,763 kroons in July, 10,823 kroons in August and 11,122 kroons in September. In the second quarter of this year the average gross monthly wage reached 11,549 kroons and in the first quarter, 10,322 kroons. The average for 2006 was 9,407 kroons.

This year the average gross monthly and hourly wages have risen by roughly 20 percent year-on-year in each quarter, the Statistical Office observed.

### Estonian Unions, Employers Agree on EUR 278 Minimum Wage

**Nov 21 - The Estonian Confederation of Trade Unions (EAKL) and the Estonian Employers' Confederation agreed on an official minimum monthly wage of 4,350 kroons (EUR 278) for 2008.**

Data from different sources shows the number of recipients of the minimum wage in Estonia as being between 15,000 and 70,000.

### Unemployment Insurance Benefits Paid to 3,386 People in Estonia in Q3

**Nov 21 - In the third quarter of this year 3,386 people in Estonia were drawing unemployment insurance benefits compared to 3,665 a year earlier and 3,430 in the second quarter, the Unemployment Insurance Fund said.**

The biggest number of recipients was recorded in the Harju County -- 1,252, next came the Ida-Viru County with 593 and the Tartu County with 271 recipients. The number was the smallest in the island county of Hiiumaa at 25.

### Domestic Sales by Eesti Energia Up 11 Pct On Year in October

**Nov 26 - Eesti Energia sold 632 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity on the domestic market in October, 63 GWh or 11 percent more than in the same month in 2006.**

Growth of the economy and lower-than-average outside temperatures in October had a positive effect on sales, the state-owned electricity company said.

## Glasketek to Open Baltics' Largest Wooden Window Plant

**Nov 21 - Glasketek opened the Baltic states' largest wooden window plant in Estonia's second-largest city of Tartu representing an investment of more than 100 million kroons (EUR 6.4 mln).**

The new plant with an area of 8,000 square meters is going to make up to 250 wooden windows a day, which is nearly five times more than the existing production capacity, the company said.

The facility will give work to 80 people, chairman of Glasketek's supervisory board Vladimir Obershneider said.

"It's a largely export-oriented production unit that supports Glasketek's overall operating strategy," he added.

## Estonian Air's Passenger Numbers Up 19 Pct on Year in October

**Nov 21 - The number of passengers carried by Estonian Air grew in October by 19.3 percent year-on-year to 72,681.**

Passenger numbers on scheduled flights increased by 22.7 percent to 61,898 and the growth on charter flights was 2.7 percent, the national carrier said.

Acting chief executive Andrus Aljas attributed the growth in passenger numbers primarily to Estonian Air's expanded fleet that offers more seats.

The company performed 1,220 flights last month, up by 229 and 445 respectively from September 2006 and October 2006.

The most popular destinations in October were Brussels, Frankfurt, Kiev and Moscow, which saw passenger numbers soar by respectively 64, 42, 38 and 17 percent compared to the same month a year ago.

Estonian Air is owned by the Estonian state, SAS Group and the investment bank Cresco. The airline offers direct flights from Tallinn to 19 European destinations and from Kuressaare in the island of Saaremaa to Stockholm. The company carried 689,800 passengers in 2006.

## Olympic Opens EUR 1 Mln Casino in Ukrainian Capital

**Nov 26 - A subsidiary of the listed Estonian company Olympic Entertainment Group (OEG) opened a new slot casino in Kiev, capital of Ukraine.**

It is the 14th Olympic Casino in Ukraine and investment in the facility totalled more than a million euros, Olympic told the stock exchange on Monday.

In addition, the company owns five casinos operating under the Eldorado brand, which were acquired in September and are about to be brought under the Olympic Casino brand.

A week ago the first Olympic Casino branded casino opened in the Romanian capital Bucharest.

## Playtech Starts Cooperation with Asian Gaming Operator

**Nov 26 - Playtech, the designer, developer and licensor of software for the gaming industry that runs a development unit based in Tartu, Estonia, announced that it had signed a license**

**contract with one of the largest Asia-facing online gaming operators.**

For reasons of confidentiality the licensee cannot be named at this point, Playtech said in a press release.

The company, which has a strong and diversified presence in the Asia-Pacific region, is a significant addition to Playtech's licensee portfolio and reflects Playtech's continued success in the penetration of the Asia-Pacific region, it said.

Playtech will provide the licensee with software platforms for its casino, poker and Asian peer-to-peer (P2P) games, which are being developed for the first time by Playtech.

Playtech is contracted to develop further Asian P2P games for the licensee.

Playtech stated that the contract was significant for its future profitability and that the contract was expected to become earnings enhancing during the second quarter of 2008.

## SPORTS

### Estonia Names Levadia's Tarmo Rütli to Coach National Football Team

**Nov 22 - The Estonian Football Association signed an agreement with Tarmo Rütli, coach of local champions FC Levadia, to serve as head coach of the national team in the next two years.**

Under an agreement between the association and FC Levadia, Rütli will be the head coach of both the national team and the main squad of FC Levadia in 2008, while in 2009 he will head only the national side.

"This kind of cooperation marks an important step for the entire Estonian football. We believe that in Tarmo Rütli we have the right man to manage the Estonian national team and that he will cope successfully in two jobs," Aivar Pohlak, president of the Estonian Football Association, said.

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