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TARTU PEACE TREATY ANNIVERSARY



Head of the Estonian delegation Jaan Poska signing the Tartu Peace Treaty, 2 February 1920.

Estonia Marks Anniversary of Tartu Peace Treaty

Feb 2 - Celebrations to mark the anniversary of the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty between Estonia and Russia took place on 2 February.

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves held a speech in Vanemuine Concert Hall in Tartu, emphasizing the importance of the peace treaty.

"In concluding the Tartu Peace Treaty, Estonia became a subject of international law. Meaning we became a recognized country, no longer a territory," President Ilves said.

The president also emphasized that Estonia must have a clear understanding of her own capabilities and opportunities. "I argue that we are capable of much more. We must abandon the attitude that we are too small to make a difference. Estonia would never have established its independence with the Tartu Peace Treaty 88 years ago by appealing to its smallness and thus also to its insignificance," he said.

According to the president, Estonia's task today is to have an impact and influence in the European Union and NATO regarding issues with the greatest and most immediate bearing on our interests. "Our goals include Estonia's own initiatives in areas whose relevance others perhaps have not yet realised. Estonia's initiative on cyber security in NATO serves as a good example," he concluded.

A large part of the celebrations, which included the announcement of an architecture competition for the design of the peace treaty monument, focused on the southern city of Tartu, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1920.

An architecture competition for the design of the Tartu Peace Treaty Monument was announced in the historic building where the treaty was signed. Further events included a history conference on a standoff between Soviet police and students in the streets of Tartu on Feb. 2, 1988, the first time the anniversary was marked in public during the Soviet occupation.

The president's speech can be read from his web-site: <http://www.president.ee/en/duties/speeches.php>

FOREIGN NEWS

Government Approves Draft Law for Ratification of Lisbon Treaty

Jan 31 - The government of Estonia approved the draft law for ratifying the Lisbon Treaty and forwarded it to the Riigikogu for ratification.

According to Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, the goal of the Lisbon Treaty is to increase the effectiveness of the European Union's decision-making processes. "The Union will become more uniform and will certainly be closer to its citizens," said Paet. "We hope that the Riigikogu will be ready to ratify the treaty in the spring," he added.

One of the most essential changes made by the Lisbon Treaty is the balancing of the European Union institutional framework. "The pillar structure used until now will be replaced, as will the notion of the European Community, which will now be referred to as the European Union," said Foreign Minister Paet.

Foreign Minister Paet emphasised the fact that The Lisbon Treaty will give more legitimacy and transparency to the European Parliament. "The co-decision procedure will be expanded, and Council sessions will be disclosed during legislation drafting," said Paet.

Acting on a qualified majority of votes in most areas will, according to Foreign Minister Paet, make the European Union decision-making process quicker and more effective. "The creation of the roles of President of the European Council as well as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will help increase unity among the institutions," Paet noted. "It will also support the consistency of EU policies," he added.

FOREIGN NEWS



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

President Ilves Met with the NATO Secretary General

Feb 4 - President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and spoke to the representatives of the alliance's member states in the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

The Estonian head of state spoke at length about cyber security and the need to confront cyber attacks with a united front.

"The cyber attacks against the institutions of governmental power, the private sector and the media, which we have seen in the case of several countries, including Estonia, are a serious security risk, not just a crime," President Ilves stressed, while thanking the allies for their support for the NATO cyber security centre to be established in Tallinn. "I am pleased that NATO views this topic as a security, not just technical issue."

Speaking about the NATO mission in Afghanistan, the Estonian head of state said that the alliance's possibilities for success in its largest military operation will increase if, along with ensuring the security situation, a greater contribution is made to civil projects in this country torn by chaos and violence.

President Ilves noted that the role of the European Union and the UN is very important in this regard.

"Both these organizations must increase their contributions and support alongside NATO's efforts in order to increase Afghanistan's security for their population as well as the international community," the head of state stressed, promising to help the Afghanistan operation achieve broader international support.

President Ilves also touched on the future of Kosovo, saying that no country should be allowed to hinder or block the peaceful solution of this important problem for Europe for their own selfish reasons. "Moreover, the only precedent that the recognition of Kosovo would create is that genocide and ethnic cleansing will end in defeat," the Estonian president emphasized.

President Ilves also spoke about the enlargement of NATO, reiterating Estonia's support for issuing accession invitations to Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia at the Bucharest Summit meeting in April.

"In respect to providing Georgia and Ukraine with Membership Action Plans or MAPs, then I repeat what I said two weeks ago in Tbilisi: we are firm, but exacting supporters of Georgia. This means that if the reform efforts of Georgia do not subside, neither will our wish to help them, although we will not make any concessions in our attitude towards democracy and adherence to fundamental freedoms and rights," said the Estonian head of state.

He affirmed Estonia's support for the wish of Ukraine and Georgia to join the MAP program, which would be a stimulus for both Kiev and Tbilisi to promote democracy as well as civil society and market economy reforms.

Paet: Serbians Chose the Path Towards Europe

Feb 4 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet expressed his pleasure over the democratic presidential elections held in Serbia, which saw a large voter turnout. He also welcomed the winning candidate Boris Tadić.

The foreign minister hopes that Serbia will continue integrating into the European Union, because that is the key to stable development in the region. "Through these elections, the Serbians demonstrated that they choose the path towards Europe," said Paet.

According to the foreign minister, the European Union has expressed interest in advancing co-operation with Serbia. "Now it is essential to move forward and conclude Political Agreement on Co-operation between the EU and Serbia, as this will hold Serbia on the European path," he noted. The European Commission also plans to begin a visa dialogue with Serbia.

Estonia Helping to Reform Moldova's Radio-TV Company

Feb 3 - The Estonian Foreign Ministry is supporting consultations for Moldova's national public radio-TV company (TRM - Teleradio-Moldova) with 511,180 kroons. The sum is being allocated from the Foreign Ministry's development and humanitarian aid budget.

According to Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, a democratic society with a market economy cannot function without balanced journalism. "The Moldovan media landscape must become more contemporary and European," said Paet. "The Moldovans are eager for Estonia to share its experiences and knowledge," he added.

Estonian Public Broadcasting (Eesti Rahvusringhääling - ERR) will consult on the reforms of Moldova's public radio-TV company. The goal of the project is to create a strategy for a balanced media organisation along democratic traditional European standards, drawing from the ERR's experiences.

The aid of ERR experts will help to further the reforms already started at TRM. There are plans to make changes in the quantity and quality of programmes and in the organisational structure. Plans also include optimising the number of workers and working out an effective motivation system.

Moldova is one of Estonia's priority nations for development co-operation, along with Afghanistan, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Ansip Confirms Support of Georgia's accession to European Union, NATO

Feb 4 - Meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenzidze in Tbilisi Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip expressed support for Georgia's accession to the European Union and NATO.

The Prime Minister said that Estonia and Georgia were good friends and that ties of friendship between the two countries could only become closer.

"Georgia is in the Estonians' hearts and minds. We want to see you together with us in the European Union and NATO," Ansip said.

But Ansip also underlined that the imminent parliamentary elections would have to be open and fair. The prime minister said a stable legal environment is necessary for shaping a business landscape foreign investors would be interested in. He said Estonia was ready to contribute to the shaping of a stable business environment.

"Estonia supports the development of stable and predictable business environment Estonian entrepreneurs could easily enter. We are always ready to give advice on the organization of parliamentary elections in the form of central electoral committee experts," the prime minister said.

Gurgenzidze thanked Estonia for its support. He said that Estonia was an example to Georgia in the development of a liberal market economy.

"There are few similar cases of success that are such a great example for us," the Georgian prime minister said. "In the sphere of development of transatlantic co-operation Estonia has been both an inspiring and instructive supporter," the head of the Georgian government said.

Gurgenzidze said the imminent parliamentary elections would be a touchstone of political maturity for Georgia. He pointed out that Georgia's goal is renewal of democracy, and that in preparing for the new elections they have been learning from earlier mistakes.

During his visit to Georgia Ansip opened an Estonian-Georgian business seminar in Tbilisi.

Estonian Experts to Begin Participating in OECD Committees

Jan 31 - Deputy Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Thelma Askey was in Estonia on a visit, accompanied by a group of experts.

The OECD delegation introduced the Estonian accession negotiation commission to the action plan for joining the OECD, as well as the most important areas emphasised in the plan. These include environmental protection, combating bribery, tax issues, the protection of intellectual property rights, and the evaluation and analysis of economic development.

According to Undersecretary for Economic and Development Affairs Mart Laanemäe, who is leading the Estonian accession negotiation commission, Estonian specialists will begin participating in the work of OECD committees during the negotiation period already. "Participation in the actual work of

the OECD is one part of the preparation of our experts," said Laanemäe.

Estonia was invited to begin accession negotiations with the OECD in May of 2007, along with Israel, Slovenia, Chile, and Russia. In December, the OECD Ministerial Council approved the action plan for Estonia's accession.

The OECD is a forum for industrially developed democratic nations which is based in Paris. It was established by nineteen nations on 30 September 1961, and has now grown to thirty members. Criteria for membership are a free market economy, democratic pluralism, and honouring of human rights.

Cyprus Plans to Open Embassy in Estonia

Feb 1 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with his Cypriot colleague Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, in Estonia on a visit, on Friday, 1 February.

At the meeting, bilateral relations, co-operation in the area of tourism, and Cyprus's experience with transitioning to the euro were discussed.

The foreign ministers agreed that relations between the two nations are very good, but that there is room for development in many areas. According to Urmas Paet, co-operation in the field of tourism should certainly be developed further. "Currently Cyprus is one of the least popular travel destinations in Europe for Estonians. It is visited significantly less than other Mediterranean countries," he said. The Cypriot foreign minister believes that more frequent travel would be facilitated by starting direct flights between the two nations. According to Kozakou-Marcoullis, Cyprus also plans to open an embassy in Tallinn.

The ministers also talked about matters related to migration. Foreign Minister Paet assured that Estonia, as a border country, cannot remain indifferent to immigration problems and that Estonia understands the concerns of the southern regions of the European Union. "It is important to combat the primary causes of illegal immigration, and one means of doing this is co-operating with the nations where it originates, and providing focused developmental aid," said Paet.

Foreign Minister Kozakou-Marcoullis has also been the Cypriot ambassador to Estonia, residing in Stockholm.



Urmas Paet and his Cypriot colleague Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis giving a press conference at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Georgian Public Servants Visited Estonia

Feb 5 - **A delegation from the Georgian Justice Ministry Population Registry Office is on a visit to Estonia in order to learn about the structure of the Estonian population registry, the legal basis of vital records and citizenship and migration policy.**

Einike Uri, Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry for Population and Regional affairs, said the Georgian colleagues were interested in the legal basis of the Estonian population registry and e-services. She added that the visit was intended above all for exchange of experiences is the collection and storage of vital information.

At the ministry, the guests learned about the structure of vital registry acts and the process of documentation, electronic signature and ID-card systems, and a new document printing line at the Citizenship and Migration Board.

Representatives of the e-governance academy advanced visitors on Estonia's e-governance projects and specialists of AS Andemevara about IT developments and improvements. At the Tallinn registrar's office, the guests learned about vital record operations and work in the population registry.

The Ambassador of Luxembourg Presented his Credentials

Jan 31 - **Jean Faltz, the first ambassador of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to Estonia, presented his credentials to President Toomas Hendrik Ilves.**

At the meeting, the Estonian head of state expressed his delight that bilateral relations with Luxembourg are friendly and sound. "The high-level meetings to date have proven how important dialogue and co-operation are between Estonia and Luxembourg in questions regarding European Union domestic and foreign policy, as well as security policy," said President Ilves.

"Moreover, Estonia is interested in closer economic contacts between the two countries and the continued activation of trade relations," added the head of state.

According to President Ilves, Estonia has learned a lot from Luxembourg about how a small country can have influence in and through the European Union.

The president recalled that it was Luxembourg that gave Estonia the invitation for accession negotiations with the European Union. The name of the village of Schengen in Luxembourg has also taken on a real meaning and practical value for Estonians since 21st December of this year, as a symbol of one of the fundamental freedoms of the European Union—the freedom of movement. The Estonian head of state expressed his hope that the expansion of the Schengen visa space has increased the interest of Luxembourg's entrepreneurs in Estonia and encouraged them to make more investments in Estonia. The ambassador resides in Prague.

The President of Estonia Accepted the Credentials of the Cambodian Ambassador

Jan 31 - **President Toomas Hendrik Ilves received Khieu Thavika, the ambassador of the**

Kingdom of Cambodia, who presented his credentials to the Head of State.

"Estonia is interested in the intensification of relations between the two countries. Opportunities should primarily be found to expand economic contacts," President Ilves said at the meeting. According to the president, the naming of Honorary Consuls would facilitate the mutual familiarization of Estonia and Cambodia, and the resolution of possible consular issues.

Ambassador Thavika and the Estonian head of state both stated that one possible field of co-operation is tourism, which is an important economic sector for both Estonia and Cambodia.

The first Cambodian ambassador was accredited to Estonia in November 2006. The Cambodian ambassador resides in Moscow.

Estonian Anniversary Year to be Marked in 37 Countries

Feb 5 - **Estonia will organize a total of 170 cultural events, half of them concerts, in 37 foreign countries to mark its 90th anniversary year.**

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said that to mark the anniversary year, Estonia's foreign missions would organize 170 events with a total budget of 10.5 million kroons.

There will be 75 musical events, 35 exhibitions, ten film screenings, 11 literary events, and 14 seminars or conferences on Estonian history and culture in foreign countries.

Paet added that as the events are organized over a long period, there could be changes in the present plans and several events are still at the idea level.

The biggest of the musical events is a concert series, Musical Gift from a Musical Country. Paet said that concerts in this series would be organized in Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Great Britain, countries that played an important role in the consolidation of Estonian independence.

The concerts will feature respectively the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the Estonian National Male Choir, the Tallinn Chamber Choir, the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, and the ETV Girls' Choir.

Of other events an Estonian team will take part in an afforestation campaign and the organization of the country's first ski marathon in Turkey.

Paet said that Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, who will be on a visit to Turkey at the time, would presumably race in the marathon.

In addition, the Estonian embassy in Moscow is planning to organize receptions and concerts in five to six Russian cities that have historical links with Estonia. Paet added that Moscow, St. Petersburg and Pskov would certainly be among those cities.

DEFENCE NEWS

Finnish Air Force Chief Visiting Estonia

Jan 30 - **The commander of the Finnish Air Force, Lt. Gen. Heikki Lyytinen, arrived in Tallinn for a visit.**

Lyytinen's Estonian counterpart Col. Valeri Saar gave him an overview of the present situation and future plans of the Estonian force, military spokespeople said.

The air force chiefs discussed radar procurements, exchanges of air surveillance information among countries belonging to different

international organizations, and training of specialists.

Lyytinen also visited the air surveillance division and air base.

The Estonian and Finnish air forces have earlier worked in co-operation, mainly in the field of training. Estonian communications and radar specialists have been taught at the Tikkankoski training center of the Finnish Air Force.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Currency rates in kroons:

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

(Bank of Estonia)

Estonia: Port of Tallinn to Invest EUR 22.7 Million in Paldiski

Feb 5 - **The supervisory board of the state-owned company Tallinna Sadam (Port of Tallinn) decided in favour of an investment of 355 million kroons (EUR 22.7 mln) in the Paldiski South Harbour for the construction of new quays.**

It also approved an investment of 25 million kroons in the Old City Harbor of Tallinn for the improvement of new ships calls, Tallinna Sadam told the stock exchange.

In the South Harbor of Paldiski, a coastal town situated some 50 kilometres to the west of Tallinn, an eighth quay line is about to be built with a length of 160.1 meters and a ninth quay line with a length of 247.5 meters.

The quay lines will be built in the sea with a depth of up to 13 meters and the area between the new quay line and the existing quay will be filled and covered.

Work in Paldiski is expected to start at the beginning of 2009 and end in late May in the same year.

Managers Increase their Shareholdings in Estonian Shipper Tallink

Feb 5 - **Tallink Grupp CEO Enn Pant and a number of other managers bought additional shares, worth several million kroons, in the shipping group in January.**

The largest transaction took place on the last day of January, when OU Mersok, a holding of Enn Pant, bought shares in the shipping group for 4.05 million kroons (EUR 0.26 mln). A few days before that Pant had bought 1.98 million kroons' worth of shares as an individual.

OU Activus, a company owned by Tallink's supervisory board member Ain Hanschmidt, bought Tallink equity for 1.28 million kroons on Jan. 28 whereas a day later OU Tekali, a company of Tallink supervisory board chairman Toivo Ninnas, spent nearly half a million kroons to buy shares.

Andres Hunt, member of Tallink's management board, purchased shares on several occasions during the month for about a quarter of million kroons overall.

The largest shareholder of the listed Estonian shipping group is the company AS Infortar, the principal owners of which are Enn Pant, Kalev Järvelill and Ain Hanschmidt.

Estonian Development Fund Planning to Invest EUR 6.4 Million this Year

Jan 30 - **The Estonian Development Fund is planning to invest a total of 100 million kroons (EUR 6.4 mln) into about six Estonian companies this year.**

Ott Pärn, CEO of Development Fund, said the fund could not mention any concrete project before the investment was made. "But we can say that we have analyzed Internet and IT business plans, business ideas that could be classified as modernization of traditional sectors and ideas from other technological spheres," he said.

In its choice of potential investment projects, Pärn said, the fund would mainly focus on the business model of the project, that is, its real, market potential on the international scale.

The Estonian Development Fund is a public law organization established in 2006, and its aim is to initiate and support modernization of Estonia's economic structure, growth of export and creation of jobs.

The fund does not give out irretrievable aid, but makes risk capital investments into the stock capital of technology-intensive, growth-oriented companies. This means that the fund will acquire a holding in the company as a result of the investment, help the company get on its feet and will sell its holding after a few years.

Characteristic to risk capital funds, successful investments must make up for the costs of not so successful or miscarried investments.

SPORT NEWS

BMW Sauber Sign Marko Asmer as Formula One Test Driver

Feb 2 - **BMW Sauber have decided to take on two test drivers for the 2008 season, with former Formula One driver Christian Klien of Austria appointed the team's test and reserve driver, while Estonian Marko Asmer has joined as the second junior test driver.**

Klien, 24, raced for Jaguar Racing and then Red Bull Racing in the 2005 and 2006 seasons, and joins BMW after a year at Honda as their test driver, the online portal autosport.com reported.

Asmer, 23, is the reigning British F3 champion. He is the first ever driver from a Baltic country to join a Formula One team.

"We wanted a third driver with Formula One racing experience, as well as an up-and-coming young driver for us to train up to Formula One level," said BMW motorsport director Mario Theissen.

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