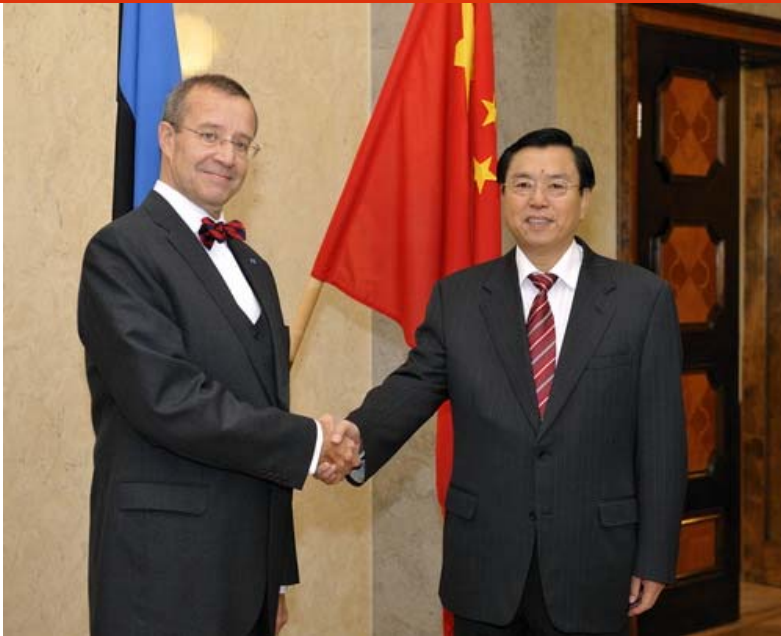


Estonian Review

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CHINESE VICE PREMIER VISITS ESTONIA



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Dejiang, 3 November.

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President of the Republic Met With Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

3 November - **At today's meeting between President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Zhang Dejiang, it was acknowledged that numerous opportunities are available for further co-operation between two countries, particularly in the sphere of trade and research.**

"The speed and scope of economic reform in China is rather impressive, especially against the background of the current economic recession," said President Ilves.

"For China, Estonia's main advantage is its location – we are only separated by one country," said President Ilves, emphasising the possible significant role of transit trade in relations between Estonia and China. "Estonia could be one of the gates to the European Union, and also to the south."

"There is also potential for co-operation between our countries in the research sphere, such as information technology," said the Estonian head of state.

Facilitating closer communication between the citizens of the two countries by promoting contacts in the sphere of both tourism and culture was the first alternative for joint ventures that was highlighted by President Ilves.

Mr. Zhang Dejiang, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, affirmed that the economic and trade relations between Estonia and China have huge potential for development, and there are also several untapped opportunities available. He also assured that China is willing to assist Estonian enterprises enter the Chinese market.

Ansip: Economic Co-operation Between Estonia and China Has Great Potential

2 November - **Today at Stenbock House, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip welcomed Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Dejiang and the high-level delegation accompanying him, who are on a two-day visit to Estonia.**

Ansip declared that the co-operation between the two countries has intensified, but regardless of the increase in business contacts, the development of bilateral economic relations has potential and as yet unused opportunities.

When speaking about new co-operation perspectives, the Prime Minister pointed out Estonia's almost 100 years of experience in mining and processing oil shale. "In Estonia, a world-class high-tech solution has been developed for the production of shale oil, and we are ready to share this experience in mutual cooperation with China," he said.

At the meeting, co-operation between ports and airports was also discussed, especially with regard to the development of infrastructure. For example, according to the prime minister, a logistics and distribution centre for Chinese goods could be established at the Port of Tallinn. In regards to economic co-operation, similar interests for the promotion of information and communication technology were also discussed. Ansip introduced to the Chinese deputy prime minister both the Estonian e-government and the public e-services that are in widespread use here.

During the meeting, the prime minister introduced the current state of the Estonian economy and declared that the investment climate here is reliable and stable and all direct investments are welcome. "Estonia is a country with an open economy, which has consistently worked towards establishing an attractive investment environment," he said. Ansip was hopeful that the co-operation memoranda signed today with regard to the promotion of investments and recovery of trade, will serve as a good basis for successful business relations. "Mutual investments are of crucial importance, especially now when the economic environment needs new ideas and development perspectives," Prime Minister Ansip declared.

Of the existing co-operation in other fields, Ansip pointed out the co-operation in research and education and cooperation in the field of culture between the two countries, and both parties saw potential in the promotion of tourism as well.

FOREIGN NEWS

Paet: EXPO Will Be Good Opportunity to Introduce Estonia in China and Asia

2 November - **Today Foreign Minister Urmass Paet met with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun.** At the meeting they discussed Estonia-China economic relations, includes matters related to the EXPO in Shanghai in 2010, and co-operation between the nations in the areas of education and culture.

While talking to Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhijun about the world exposition taking place at the 2010 Shanghai EXPO, Foreign Minister Paet said that Estonia was preparing thoroughly for the event. "We would like to use this opportunity to introduce Estonia as best we can, as we would like to intensify ties with China and other nations and businesses working in Asia," said Paet. "Estonia is also planning many cultural events in Shanghai in co-operation with its partners in China. For example, we would like to introduce a collection of Estonian fairy tales translated from Estonian into Chinese," he added.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that Estonia would still like to strengthen economic and trade relations with China. "We are planning a meeting of the Estonia-China Joint Economic Commission at the beginning of next year in Tallinn to discuss future co-operation," said Paet.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that educational co-operation between Estonia and China is also developing successfully. "Over 100 young Chinese people are studying in Estonian institutions of higher learning, and we hope that the number of Estonian students gaining a Chinese education will also increase little by little," said Paet. "Signing an agreement for the reciprocal recognition of higher education diplomas and qualifications would help to increase educational and research co-operation," Paet added.



Foreign Minister Urmass Paet with Vice Foreign Minister of China Zhang Zhijun, 2 November.

European Union Foreign Service Will Strengthen Europe's Foreign Policy

30 October - **On Thursday, 29 October, Foreign Minister Urmass Paet participated in the session of the European Council being held in Brussels, where the foreign ministers discussed making the European Union's foreign political activities more effective and, in relation to that, matters related to Europe's foreign service.**

The European Union foreign policy leaders discussed how to make the European Union more globally influential. Foreign Minister Urmass Paet stated that the European Union member states must have a greater sense of their common responsibility for European and international security and take the European Union's strategic interests into account.

"The European Union's strength stands in the diversity of existing political and co-operation types," noted Paet. "In order to be more successful internationally, we must associate our Common Foreign and Security Policy more strongly with, for example, climate and energy policy, and internal and justice issues," Paet added.

The European Union foreign ministers agreed that more coherent European Union foreign relations will be aided by the European External Action Service (EEAS) that is to be created in accordance with the Treaty of Lisbon, hopefully very soon. "We need a wide-reaching and strong European foreign service that offers substantial support to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy," Paet asserted. "The functions of the EEAS should include consular protection and a guaranteed geographical balance regarding the personnel," Paet explained. Foreign Minister Urmass Paet stated that the European External Action Service will help increase the unity of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy and also ensure better co-ordination of the EU in other foreign activities.

Governor of Helmand Province Sent Letter of Thanks to Estonia for Support of Bost Hospital

3 November - **Foreign Minister Urmass Paet met today with the health care advisor for the governor of Afghanistan's Helmand Province Dr. Hedayatullah and the head doctor of the Province's central hospital Dr. Inayattullah.** The two health care workers from Afghanistan's Helmand Province arrived today in Estonia for a two-week training session as part of the Foreign Ministry and MTÜ Mondo's joint programme to create a supplementary training system for doctors in Helmand Province.

Foreign Minister Urmass Paet confirmed Estonia's ongoing desire to help build up the health care sector in Helmand Province. The foreign minister noted that currently the Foreign Ministry is supporting two projects in co-operation with MTÜ Mondo that are helping to establish first aid training for adults and create a supplementary training system for doctors. "At the moment, opportunities for medical workers in Helmand Province to receive any supplementary training after completing the appropriate school are extremely limited. Due to the complicated security situation and cultural factors, all of Afghanistan continues to struggle with a lack of medical personnel, particularly female doctors, nurses, and midwives," said Paet. "This training visit is the first step in our endeavour to help create the needed training centre and support the training of nurses and midwives," he added.

Health care advisor for the governor of Afghanistan's Helmand Province Dr. Hedayatullah and the head doctor of the Province's central hospital Dr. Inayattullah passed a message of gratitude on to Foreign Minister Urmass Paet from

Afghanistan's minister of health and presented a letter of thanks from the governor of Helmand to Estonia for improving the central hospital of Helmand Province and providing it with necessary medical equipment.

Paet stated that thanks to co-operation between Estonia and Great Britain, opportunities to get medical treatment in Bost Hospital have greatly improved. "The hospital's technical capabilities now meet the standards set by the health minister of Afghanistan, and this allows the hospital to take the next step of improving the quality of care and making its work more effective," stated Paet. "In addition to supplying equipment to the medical establishment, it is also very important to focus on finding the necessary personnel and training them," he emphasised.

Paet also emphasised the importance of the other project that is developing the medical skills of Afghans. "It is very important to give attention to the residents' ability to administer first aid when needed, so that they can take care of their own health and the health of their families in this way," stressed the foreign minister.

The Afghan health care workers brought up examples of the most recent positive developments in Helmand Province's health care sector, in which Estonia has played an important role. The medical technology equipment at Helmand Province's central hospital is some of the best in the province. Estonia has helped the hospital to procure, among other things, an autoclave, oxygen generators, and a portable oxygen delivery system. Lashkar Gah' in Helmand Province has begun to offer an ambulance service—this service is not available anywhere else in Afghanistan except for Kabul. Across the province there are 52 clinics offering medical aid, 16 of which have been recently opened.

More than 1.4 million people live in Helmand Province, but there are only slightly more than 1 300 health care workers there. Fewer than 100 of them are doctors and only four of them are female doctors.

Since March 2008, an Estonian health care expert has been working in the city of Lashkar Gah' in Helmand province. The expert's responsibility is implementing Estonia's development co-operation project on location and consulting with the board of the United Kingdom's development team and Helmand's provincial government about developing the health care system.



The meeting of Foreign Minister Urmass Paet with the Afghan health care workers and Estonian health care expert Anu Raisma, 3 November.

Baltic Sea Region Strategy Gets Green Light in Brussels

30 October (BNS) - The European Council in Brussels has approved the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region initiated by Estonian

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb while they sat in the European Parliament.

"I welcome the decision to approve the Baltic Sea Strategy made by European Union heads of government at today's Council meeting in Brussels," Ilves said through a spokesperson.

"This is an initiative that goes back to my report five years ago to the European Parliament's group of friends of the Baltics, which evolved into a European Parliament report that Alexander Stubb led to adoption two years later. Now it has become the EU's official macro-regional strategy."

The strategy is directed primarily towards the bloc's member states that are interested in creating closer and more open ties in the EU's Baltic Sea region.

It now depends on countries surrounding the Baltic Sea what kind of content the strategy will have, the president said. "I see three major goals in it," he added.

In the president's view, improving the quality of the Baltic marine environment could be the first aim. "Namely environment is one of the topics of the Baltic Sea strategy that has to be extended to all countries involved, including those whose rivers run into the Baltic Sea."

Secondly, the EU's four freedoms – free movement of people, labour, capital and services – should be put to the best possible use, developed and increased, Ilves suggested. This calls for an agreement resulting in the elimination of the secondary obstacles in the way of the four freedoms, he said.

The president sees creation of new synergies and forms of co-operation as a third objective. "If we wish that our universities, researchers and small and medium enterprises survive and are successful in a globalised world where we have to compete with China, India and the United States, we need to work together more effectively. We must have the courage to avoid duplication of actions and foster the creation of centres of competence," Ilves said.

In the president's words, the Baltic Sea strategy gives the countries on the Baltic rim the chance to take the reins. "Let us concentrate together on this opportunity and find the will to remove the political obstacles in force to the present day," he said.

Estonia Supports Ukraine During Flu Outbreak

3 November - Foreign Minister Urmass Paet said that Estonia is responding to Ukraine's appeal and will help Western Ukraine obtain 500 000 kroons' worth of A/H1N1 treatments in response to the flu outbreak in the country. "The medicine will be sent within the next few days. We hope that the aid provided by Estonia will help to alleviate the situation in Ukraine," said Foreign Minister Paet.

On 31 October, Ukraine issued an appeal through the European Union and directly to Estonia for help with the A/H1N1 epidemic in Western Ukraine, in order to obtain treatment and protective resources to restrict and alleviate the spread of the virus.

On 30 October Ukraine officially announced that three regions in Western Ukraine were being declared epidemic zones due to the A/H1N1 flu virus. A quarantine has been declared in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Transcarpathia, Vinnytsia, Volynia,

Khmelnytskyi, Rivne, Chernivtsi, and Lvov oblasts. Schools have been shut down for three weeks.

Ansip: Unity is the Basis for Success in Baltic Sea Region

31 October - Prime Minister Andrus Ansip discussed with Finnish politicians the main challenges facing the Baltic Sea region in the foreseeable future. Ansip introduced Estonia's positions at the seminar "Baltic Sea in the Foreseeable Future", which was hosted by Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen.

When speaking about the future vision of the Baltic Sea, Ansip expressed hope that the active living environment and attractive opportunities for doing business in the region are preserved. According to him, the current economic crisis is receding and, at the moment, a new rise must be prepared for. He also believes that the region will become even more homogeneous in the next decade. "I believe that in the next decade, all countries by the Baltic Sea, which are members of the European Union, will join the Euro-zone," he said.

According to the head of government, a wider degree of integration must take place in the field of energy as well. The Prime Minister believes that the region's densely interwoven economic zone will receive new power from a common energy market. Ansip also expressed hope that in the future the Baltic Sea region will be recognised around the world mainly for its high level of use of sustainable and innovative technologies.

At the seminar, the Prime Minister introduced Estonia's goals with regard to renewable energy, and also talked about the fiscal policy goal of Estonia joining the Euro-zone in 2011.

Estonian Interior Minister on Visit to Georgia

2 November (BNS) - Estonia's Interior Minister Marko Pomerants is on a visit to Georgia this week to discuss ways how to make co-operation between the interior ministries of the two countries and their subordinated agencies more efficient.

Pomerants is scheduled to meet during his visit with Georgia's Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili and Deputy Interior Minister Shalva Janashvili.

Meetings have also been scheduled with the rector of the Georgian Interior Ministry Academy Khatia Dekanoidze, the chief of the border police Zaza Gogava, the chief of the patrol police Giorgi Grigalashvili and the director of the emergencies management authority Irakli Kadagidze.

The minister is accompanied on the trip by Priit Männik, rector of the Estonian Public Service Academy, Tõnu Hunt, adviser to the chief of the Estonian Border Guard, and Ain Karafin, deputy chief of the Rescue Board.

Estonia and Slovenia Sign Agreement on Exchange and Mutual Protection of Classified Information

28 October - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Zbogar in Luxembourg. The Estonian and Slovenian foreign ministers signed an agreement on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information.

At the meeting, the foreign ministers also discussed Estonia as the possible location of the European Union IT agency. "Estonia feels that the more effective use of information technology in European Union internal security is very important, and therefore the creation of a separate IT agency is essential," said Paet. "Taking into account Estonia's highly-developed information technology sector, Estonia has all the key requirements needed to be a good place for the agency," Paet added.

At the meeting, they also talked about co-operation in international organisations and supporting each other's candidacies in various organisations.

Estonian Education Minister to Speak at Cambridge

30 October (BNS) - Estonian Education Minister Tõnis Lukas will today visit the Estonian School in London and deliver a speech at the education department of the University of Cambridge.

The Estonian school that opened this year has 36 students, most of whom come from mixed families with one ethnic Estonian parent. The Education Ministry has supported the school through the Estonian Institute with teaching materials, a spokesperson for the ministry said.

In addition, financing for the school's project "Development of the teaching of the Estonian language and culture in expatriate Estonian community" has been provided through the compatriots' programme.

On Friday afternoon the minister will meet with representatives of the British Estonian Association in Cambridge. He also will, at the invitation of the students' educational forum, speak at the University of Cambridge about a small nation's opportunities and choices in developing education and research.

According to Lukas, the decline in the number of high school graduates poses a challenge to Estonia, and because of that the role of universities in adult education is becoming increasingly important.

President of the Republic Received Credentials From Ambassadors of Japan, France, Italy and Turkey

29 October - President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met today with the ambassadors of Japan, France, Italy and Turkey, who presented their credentials to the Estonian head of state.

The promotion of bilateral relations and possible co-operation in the sphere of IT was discussed at the meeting with Ambassador of Japan Hiroshi Maruyama, who resides in Helsinki. President Ilves invited the ambassador to visit the E-Academy, ITC Demo Centre and the NATO Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.

At the meeting of President Ilves and Ambassador of the Republic of France Frédéric Billet, the discussion centred on the further enhancement of the current friendly and good relations, particularly in the areas of defence and culture. The Estonian head of state welcomed the return of France to the military structure of NATO and enquired about the views of France on the further development of NATO.

In meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Italy Rosa Maria Chicco Ferraro, the president recalled his official visit to Italy during the summer.

According to the head of state, Estonia and Italy enjoy close co-operation, which could be developed further in several areas. Estonia would especially like to see the strengthening of contacts in the sphere of economy, culture and education.

At the meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey Ayşenur Alpaslan, the President congratulated the ambassador and the state of Turkey on the Turkish public holiday. The meeting centred on bilateral relations between Estonia and Turkey and defence co-operation in NATO. The Estonian head of state confirmed that Estonia supports Turkey's movement towards the European Union.



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves accepting the credentials of Turkish Ambassador Ayşenur Alpaslan, 29 October.

DOMESTIC NEWS

More Than Two Million Migratory Birds Pass Estonia's Cape Põõsaspea This Fall

28 October (BNS) - **More than two million birds have passed Estonia's Cape Põõsaspea on their migration to the south this fall, the daily Eesti Päevaleht reported.**

The paper writes that the headland is the best place in Northern Europe to observe mass bird migration as in both the spring and the fall hundreds of thousands of long-tailed ducks, barnacle geese, ducks, geese and a smaller number of gulls and snipes fly through a seven-kilometer channel between Cape Põõsaspea and Osmussaar Island, taking their bearings by the coastline.

More than two million passing birds have been counted at Põõsaspea before today. If on the peak migration days nearly 100 000 birds were counted at Põõsaspea then now the flow has dwindled to under 10 000 birds a day.

Mostly long-tailed ducks and velvet scoters are still passing in smaller groups.

Ornithologist Margus Ellermaa said the number of long-tailed ducks had contracted in the recent years. So if in the 1990s up to a quarter million long-tailed ducks were counted on the best days of migration then this year that number of long-tailed ducks has been counted over the whole season. The counters will leave Põõsaspea after the first week in November but whooper swans and Steller's eiders have not even started their migration yet.

Populations of Several Wild Animals at Record High

3 November (BNS) - **Latest data show that the population size of some wild animal species living in Estonian forests has risen more over the past decade than ever before during the time for which records exist, Eesti Päevaleht said.**

Peep Mannil, head of the game census department at the Centre for Forest Protection and Silviculture of the Estonian Ministry of Environment, said that if the previous decade generally was characterised by a reduction in the numbers of hunting game then in the present decade a big rise has taken place.

The most numerous game species in Estonia is roe deer with an estimated population size of 100 000-200 000. The number of roe deer reached its peak a couple of years ago, and in recent years hunting has been intensified because of the damage that the animals inflict on young forest.

The numbers of moose also reached its peak in the years 2006 and 2007, when stepped-up hunting was started. In recent years the number of moose has been stable at around 11 000 animals.

The size of the wild boar population was estimated to have been 23 000 before the breeding season and the peak is still to be reached, according to researchers. During 2008 nearly 20 000 wild boars were shot in Estonia, more than in any other year before. According to Mannil the annual hunting limit for wild boar should be moved up by a further 5 000 to keep curbs on their number.

The number of brown bears stands at an all-time high of at least 700 and the range of the species in Estonia has expanded to the west and the south. The numbers of red fox and raccoon dog have grown in recent years as a result of vaccination against rabies.

The wolf population of Estonia hit a low in the early 2000s when only seven litters were counted. Last fall the number of wolf litters counted already exceeded 30 and the number of wolves before the breeding season was estimated to have been 140.

There are also an estimated 800 units of lynx in Estonia, while the number of beavers is estimated to be 18 000, compared with 10 000 that would be the optimal number for Estonia according to scientists.

DEFENCE NEWS

Defence Minister Met With Influential Members of US Congress

30 October - **Yesterday, during his visit to the United States, Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo met with US Congressman John Shimkus and with Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman.** The main topics discussed at the meeting were Estonia-US relations, updating the NATO strategic concept, and the common priorities of Estonia and the USA.

According to Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo, the review of the NATO strategic concept must be based on our core values – the Washington Treaty and collective defence. "It must in turn encompass practical actions, and I am glad to say that NATO is on the right track here – we need planning in order to manage real security risks, and that planning has to be practiced through exercises, simulations and training. I am happy to acknowledge that we share a

common understanding with the American legislators in regard to these questions," Aaviksoo said.

According to the minister of defence, the political-military presence and visibility of the US in Europe are still important. "It re-affirms our strong relationship, which is based on the efforts of the United States to free Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States during the Cold War, and on the efforts to integrate these countries into the Western security architecture," he added.

The future of the security mission in Afghanistan was another major topic that was discussed at the meeting. According to Mr. Aaviksoo, there are important decisions to be made regarding the future of the security mission in Afghanistan – what are our common criteria for success, what is the strategy that enables us to achieve them, and what are the resources required for the implementation of that strategy.

"Afghanistan represents the actual frontline of NATO's collective defence. The current US administration has done a significant amount of work regarding the Afghanistan strategy and I am sure that in the near future decisions will be made that will enable NATO to achieve its goals," he said. Today the minister of defence will be giving a speech at the cyber defence conference "Cyber Force Structure" at the National Defence University. On Monday, he will be giving the keynote speech at the Cyber Deterrence Symposium at George Washington University.

Aaviksoo Met With US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates

3 November - Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo met at the Pentagon with his US counterpart, Robert Gates, with whom questions relating to mutual military co-operation and the future of NATO were discussed.

US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates expressed his sympathy for the Estonian soldiers killed in Afghanistan and thanked Estonia for its remarkable contributions to the ISAF. Also discussed were different options regarding how to continue Estonian-US military co-operation in Afghanistan.

Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo pointed out that although for the duration of the elections Estonia has been the biggest per capita contributor to Afghanistan with two infantry companies, keeping up such a presence is not sustainable. "We have come to a common conclusion with the Americans that our military co-operation in Afghanistan should continue primarily with the human intelligence specialists (HUMINT) and also in the context of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan," said Aaviksoo. At the meeting, Aaviksoo and Gates agreed that strategic success in Afghanistan is vital since otherwise the region will become a gathering place of mythical significance for Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists.

"At the same time, the Afghanistan mission also serves the function of our collective defence – out-of-area constitute one aspect of collective defence because they serve the protection of the interests of all the NATO member states. The problem lies in the fact that we have not yet succeeded in making this simple truth clear and understandable to the general public," said Aaviksoo.

Also discussed at the meeting were questions relating to NATO contingency planning and defence budgets. According to Aaviksoo, the topic of contingency planning has had a higher profile for the public since President Barack Obama's speeches at the Strasbourg-Kehl and Prague summits. "Contingency Plans that address all considerable dangers are a natural and routine part of NATO activities," said the Estonian minister of defence. "When it comes to defence expenditures it is regrettable that only a few NATO member states have been able to fulfil their obligations. In order to give NATO the capability to offer support to its member states when it is needed, everyone has to start investing in the creation of deployable capabilities," said Aaviksoo.

Aaviksoo said that for Estonia the presence and visibility of the US in Europe and its mutual trust and support are very important. "Very often it is most important to consult and to confer with one another before making major decisions," the minister of defence said.

Relations between NATO and Russia were also amongst the topics discussed at the meeting. "It is very clear that considering the actual strategic challenges facing Russia we have to engage in constructive co-operation with them. But that means that we have to have an elementary level of trust, which is still a long way off," Aaviksoo stated.

Cancellation of Afghan Runoff Vote Not to Speed Up ESTCOY-E's Return

2 November (BNS) - ESTCOY-E, the extra Estonian infantry company sent to Afghanistan for the period of elections, will be flown back home according to the existing timetable despite the cancellation of the runoff round in the Afghan presidential vote.

The military's chief spokesman Maj. Peeter Tali told BNS in Tallinn on Monday that the 7 November runoff in Afghanistan being called off does not affect the duration of the service of ESTCOY-E and the company will return according to the earlier plan.

ESTCOY-E is scheduled to end its activity on 15 November and its members will be flown to Estonia before their mandate ends on 1 December. The exact time depends on the timetable of transport, Tali said.

Afghanistan's election commission declared Hamid Karzai elected as president for a new term on Monday, having previously called off a runoff following the withdrawal of his only rival. The runoff, called after the first round in August was marred by widespread fraud, was to have been held on 7 November.

Former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah withdrew from the race over the weekend, citing doubts about the credibility of the election process.

Attached to the US 2nd Marine Brigade, ESTCOY-E is acting in the Garmshir area in the southern part of Helmand province. It is an area over which the allies had almost no control until this June, when US Marines moved in. Smuggling routes vital for the Taliban to the Beluchistan province in neighbouring Pakistan pass through the area.

ESTCOY-E is a one-off project to provide additional security during and after the elections held in Afghanistan on 20 August. The company was dispatched from Estonia on 8 July.

Formed on the basis of the all-professional Scouts Battalion, the unit will be part of the joint

Baltic battalion in the NATO Response Force NRF-14 in the first half of 2010.

Building of Administrative Area of Ämari Air Base to Cost EUR 5.19 Million

28 October (BNS) - **The Estonian Defence Ministry this week signed a building contract of the Ämari Air Base administrative area with Astlanda Ehitus and Ehitusfirma Rand & Tullberg at a total bidding cost of 81.28 million kroons (EUR 5.19 mln).**

Defence Ministry spokesman Peeter Kuimet told BNS that a total of 15 companies, mainly the best known names in Estonia, made bids in the procurement. The price range of the bids was from 72 million to 108 million kroons.

The building of the administrative area will include the fire, rescue and runway maintenance service buildings, a guard centre and checkpoint, a canteen and food store, accommodation for the allies' airmen, roads, the sewerage system and the fence of the air base.

The building work of the administrative area will start in the next few weeks and will last until April 2011, Kuimet said.

Building work of the traffic and maintenance area, the fuel deposit, connecting roads and electrical networks have been going on at the Ämari Air Base since fall 2008.

ECONOMIC NEWS

EBRD: Estonia's Flexibility in Crisis Has Been Impressive

2 November (BNS) - **The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said in its transition economies' overview that the flexibility of the Estonian economy in the economic crisis had been impressive so far.**

Flexibility of the economy is the main precondition to the preservation of competitiveness and the currency board, EBRD said.

In the short term, EBRD finds that Estonia's challenges are coping with the growing unemployment and bad loans.

Estonia must develop export of products with a higher value added, take the situation of the public sector finances under its control and focus on the restoration of the investors' trust and try to attract foreign investments into the country, EBRD said.

In the opinion of EBRD one of the biggest challenges for Estonia is ensuring sustainable solutions in the energy sector.

Contraction of the imbalances of the economy are once again creating a situation where transition to the euro could be possible. In order to achieve it it is necessary to focus on sustainability of the economy. EBRD assesses the fall of the Estonian economy this year at 13.2%.

Estonian University's Materials Study Method Gets European Patent

3 November (BNS) - **The Tallinn University of Technology received last week a European patent for a method of the study of materials.**

The invention makes it possible to judge the properties of a substance, structure or material by the response to an electrical excitation signal, Professor Mart Min said.

"One structure that can be thus analysed is man, starting with cells, cell cultures, tissues or organs. Areas receiving special attention are the heart and, in the case of restorative surgery, both muscle tissue and bones that are being restored," the professor said.

If someone's hand or leg has sustained serious injuries in an accident it is necessary to evaluate the process of restoration after surgery, Min explained. It will cost an estimated 10 million kroons (EUR 0.64 mln) to develop the device needed to adopt the method and make the first trial products, Min said, after which the device could be put into serial production.

If the money needed for development cannot be found in Estonia it will be necessary to engage in co-operation, which will still be better than for the invention to be left gathering dust, the professor said.

Estonian Air Considering More Weekly Flights on Tallinn-Vilnius Route

28 October (BNS) - **Estonian Air is very seriously thinking about adding flights on the Tallinn-Vilnius route.**

"After the quitting of one carrier the load factor of our flights on the Tallinn-Vilnius route has risen significantly, which very clearly demonstrates demand for direct flights," the airline's spokesperson Ilona Eskelinen told BNS. She said the Tallinn-Vilnius operation was used primarily by business travellers.

Eskelinen added that even though overall demand for air travel has decreased, the goal of Estonian Air is to preserve and to develop routes to the more important destinations for customers of its home market and to the most important European air travel hubs.

The Latvian carrier Airbaltic last Monday halted direct flights between Vilnius and Tallinn from late October until the spring of 2010.

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TEL +372 637 7600

FAX +372 637 7617

Estonian Review is also available over the internet at <http://www.vm.ee>

To subscribe, please contact: vm@vm.ee
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