
KYRGYZSTAN'S MEDIA : SUITS GO ON

By Elmira Toktogulova, journalist, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Suits between the press media and certain personalities are going on in Kyrgyzstan. The procedures mention enormous amounts of money for the media.

The important cases involving *ResPublica* and *Asaba* newspapers have ended in defeat for both of them. *ResPublica* has now to pay 200,000 soms (over USD4,000) to Amanbek Karypkulov, president of the State Broadcasting Company, and *Asaba* has to pay 5 million soms (over USD100,000) to Turdakun Usabaliev, former First Secretary of the Kyrgyz Communist Party Central Committee, for, according to him, being regularly insulted. Suits are going on: the next defendants will be *Delo No.* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kyrgyzstane* newspapers.

AN EXPENSIVE MORAL DAMAGE

The trial against the *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kyrgyzstane* weekly, which was to start on 15 January and postponed until 29 January, was once again postponed until 13 February. Bishkek's Pervomaisky district court had once again to postpone proceedings due to the absence of the plaintiff, Misir Ashyrkulov, chief of the President's staff. His action for defending his honor, dignity and business reputation was lodged with the court in December last year. It was caused by the interview given by *Delo No.* Editor-in-Chief, Viktor Zapolsky, to *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kyrgyzstane*. Zapolsky blamed Ashyrkulov, as the national security minister, for having transformed his department into the "generator of criminal and political processes that fabricates criminal cases and successfully manages to develop them into court trials." Misir Ashyrkulov claims indemnity for moral damage equal to 3,200,000 soms (about USD 65,000). He requests that any money he recovers be transferred to the Belovodskoye children's orphanage.

THE « CASTE OF THE UNTOUCHABLE »

Delo No.'s journalists, Artem Petrov and Svetlana Krasilnikova, believe this suit is far from being the last one as the courts are filled up with such suits. Human rights activists of the Bishkek-based Kyrgyz-American Human Rights Bureau state that the number of actions for defending honor and dignity dramatically increased of late. "Most of these actions are stupid", the Bureau spokesman said. "They mainly aim to strangle the free press, to deprive the citizens of their right for free expression of their opinions and for giving their views on those in power. The caste of the untouchable is forming in the country. In the civilized democratic states, the public officials who approach the court of justice must prove that the incorrect information has been prepared with malicious intent, or deliberately neglecting the truth. But it's of no need here."