
THE MONTH IN REVIEW – MAY 2001

KYRGYZSTAN

KYRGYZ PRESIDENT FOR ABOLISHING CRIMINAL PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS FOR LIBEL

Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev has developed and referred to Jogorku Kenesh (the republic's bicameral parliament) a bill to abolish criminal persecution of journalists for libel, the Head of the State's press secretary Ilyas Bekbolotov stated in Bishkek. According to him the presidential bill runs that such questions should be resolved "by administrative action." In addition Akayev has added a paragraph to the bill providing that plaintiffs suing the media are bound to pay pledge equal to 5% of the sum claimed as compensation. Previously everyone in Kyrgyzstan could sue a journalist or an edition and claim enormous sums to compensate for moral or material damage. Recently two journalists were convicted in Kyrgyzstan for libel. Bekbolotov said, the President takes these measures in order to defend freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan and to go on with democratic transformations. //ITAR-TASS agency, April 30, 2001.

CONVICTED JOURNALIST APPROACHES SUPREME COURT

Akyikat newspaper in the Jalal-Abad Province and its correspondent Mamasali Ibraimov have applied to Supreme Court claiming to reverse a judgement against him, Bakyt Orunbekov, the newspaper editor-in-chief, told Radio Azattyk correspondent on May 7. Last year the district court sentenced Ibraimov to two-year conditional imprisonment and the newspaper to 107,000 soms (about 1,200 USD) fine. Ibraimov had written several articles on corruption among the local judges and this was qualified as insult of the judges. The Jalal-Abad provincial court affirmed these verdicts this March. According to Orunbekov judge Toktosun Kasymbekov who was the plaintiff in this case also recently wrote a letter to Supreme Court asking to pardon the journalist. RFE/RL, May 7, 2001

COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT PROVINCIAL TV STATION COLLECTS SIGNATURES

Committee to support *Osh TV* station has begun to collect signatures to defend the station. The state frequencies commission has claimed that the station should change its broadcasting channel; however this will cost about 42,000 USD, according to *Osh TV* managers' calculations. The station lodged a protest against the Frequencies Commission's decision but Bishkek city court of arbitration refused its appeal. The country's higher court of arbitration plans to consider the station's application on May 15.

TAJIKISTAN

THE CHARHI GARDUN WEEKLY IS FIVE

The cultural-information newspaper *Charhi gardun* (Fortune's wheel) is five years of age. The *Charhi gardun* established by a Tajikistan widely-known journalist, Akbarali Sattorov, became one of the most popular newspapers in the country, as confirmed by numerous polls. The newspaper used to publish information on the cultural life of the country, as well as articles on family life, marriage, morality problems and melodramatic love stories. In rather a short period of time of its existence, the *Charhi gardun* has grown up into a large information company. Currently the *Charhi gardun Ltd*, headed by Akbarali Sattorov, issues six weeklies giving jobs to dozens of newspapermen, and has a wide network of its own distributors.

Among the editions of the *Charhi gardun Ltd* there are: *Digest press* which reprints foreign articles, mainly from the Russian media; a social and political newspaper *Vecherni Dushanbe* (The Evening Dushanbe); an entertainment paper for children *Aladdin*; and *Avicenna* - a weekly journal specializing in medical issues. The recently-founded financial and economic weekly *Time - Money* closes the list. At a recent meeting with pressmen, Akbarali Sattorov said that the *Times - Money* is not his last brainchild, he hopes soon to extend the number of his editions.

MORE NEWSPAPERS IN DUSHANBE

The family of Dushanbe newspapers was recently replenished with a new one: *The Advertising Paper*. It is clear from the title that this edition specializes in the publication of advertisements and insertions. The founder of the newspaper is *The Oila Ltd* (Family) headed by Sharif Khamdamov. *The Advertising Paper* became the fourth edition of this media group which also issues weekly journals *The Crime-info*, *The Oila* and *The Tochikiston*. *The Crime-info* publishes criminal chronicles and large articles on bloody crimes. One of the newspaper pages is given to the answers of lawyers to readers' questions. *The Oila* publishes melodramatic stories and soap operas. *The Tochikiston* is a social and political newspaper, published in three languages - Tajik, Russian and English.

UZBEKISTAN

NEW INTERNEWS PROJECT

The international humanitarian organization, Internews International, has launched a new project named "The Global Internet Policy Initiative" (GIPI). The project's purpose is to support Internet through legislation and policy reforms, assist the Internet-industry and Internet-market development, undertake joint research for the balance of interest in the sphere of state and public information, and heighten the information culture of the population. GIPI is an important step in the realization of citizens' constitutional rights to obtain and distribute information. Internews offices in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Indonesia, Ukraine, Russia, USA and other countries participate in the project. Within the project's framework various activities with the involvement of international institutions, NGOs and state structures are scheduled. The activities will include, amongst others, exchange of information, organization of training programs, holding of

conferences and seminars and joint projects implementation with non-commercial and commercial sectors.