

At a formal gathering entitled “Estonia is Grateful” at the Estonia Concert Hall today, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented the state decorations bestowed to acknowledge service to the country on the eve of the 89th Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia.

According to the Head of State, the decorations are presented to people who, supported by a sense of duty, kindness of heart, and inventiveness, have made Estonia greater as a people and a nation. “These decorations are a modest recognition from the state to which you have given more than could be presumed from your job or vocation. Unfortunately, virtue is noticed less often than the negative, and a simple pat on back occurs less frequently than bitter complaints,” said President Ilves.

“You demonstrate dedication,” remarked the Head of State. “It is not important if you work as a teacher, conservationist, doctor, preserver of history, police officer, creative person, or state official, or serve with Estonia’s foreign missions in Afghanistan or Iraq.”

President Ilves regretted that this year a dark shadow eclipses the shine of the state decorations. “If last year a lively and definitely justified discussion developed regarding the large number of decorations and the nomenklatura nature of the recipients, then this year, much has been said about those who did not receive decorations for various reasons, and generally reasons that were not related to the persons themselves. This is unfortunate,” said the Head of State. “I apologize for the insults that befell some of our compatriots, when the so-called fourth estate, relying on a precept of the Data Protection Inspectorate, raised a shameful cloud above them. Perhaps we need an Inspectorate of Human Dignity, which will interfere in such cases and protects compatriots from unfounded suspicions? A decoration is always a sign of recognition, but not receiving an award is never a punishment. It is just not possible to acknowledge all the capable people in one year.”

President Ilves recalled that one of the recipients is Anette-Marlen Ott, a pupil at Konguta Basic School, who organized a collection for a homeless animal shelter and whose home school motto is “Notice, influence, change.”

“These three words are the reason why you are here today,” said the Head of State. “You have noticed, influenced, and changed. For this, we thank you.”

President of the Republic presented the state decorations

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