

Early this morning, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves started a three-day state visit to the Republic of Finland, by departing from Tallinn on the Admiral Pitka, the flagship of the Estonian Navy.

“This state visit has three purposes: to confirm the unprecedented special relationship between Estonia and Finland; to develop common viewpoints for future debates in Europe; and to give new impetus to high-technology cooperation,” said the Estonian Head of State.

Upon entering Finnish waters, the Finnish naval ship Pyhäranta greeted the President of the Republic, and when the Admiral Pitka sailed past the Harmaja Lighthouse, reciprocal 21-gun salutes were sounded.

As the Admiral Pitka passed the Suomenlinna Fortress, the Estonian and Finnish national anthem was played by the Finnish Naval Orchestra.

The Admiral Pitka will moor at the Pakkahuone Pier in the center of Helsinki, where President Ilves and his wife will be greeted by the Estonian Ambassador to Finland Merle Pajula, Finnish Foreign Minister Seppo Kääriäinen, Jaakko Kalela, the Finnish Ambassador to Estonia, and the Estonian diplomats in Helsinki.

The official reception ceremony will take place in front of the Finnish Presidential Palace, where the national anthems of both countries will be played, and the Heads of State will introduce the official delegations participating at subsequent meetings during the visit.

Today, President Ilves will meet with Finnish Head of State Tarja Halonen, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen and Paavo Lipponen, the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament. In addition, President Ilves will open a Finnish-Estonian business seminar at the Helsinki City Government, and he will also place wreaths at the Heroes' Cross and Marshal Mannerheim's grave in Hietaniemi Cemetery, as well as at the Memorial to the Fallen of the Independence War in the Old Church Park. During the second half of the day, President Ilves will give a lecture at the University of Helsinki, and attend a formal dinner hosted by the Finnish President.

Mrs. Evelin Ilves will visit the Roihuvuori School in Helsinki and the Arabia ceramics factory, as well as attend the premiere of the animated film, Lotte from Gadgetville at the Bio Rex cinema.

Tomorrow, the Head of State and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will travel to Oulu, where visits will be made to the County and City Governments, the University of Oulu, Kaleva Publishers, and the PKC Group. Tomorrow evening, President Ilves will organize a reception at the Estonian Embassy in Helsinki.

The official delegation accompanying the Head of State includes, among others, Minister of Justice Rein Lang, Minister of Defence Jürgen Ligi, Commander of the Defence Forces Major-General Ants Laaneots, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Matti Maasikas, and Toomas Luman, the President of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

President Ilves is accompanied by a thirty-member business delegation.

The Head of State and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will arrive back in Estonia on the afternoon of March 16th.

Office of the President, Public Relations Department  
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