

REVIEW OF MASS MEDIA, INTERNET RESOURCES FOR NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2017- JANUARY 2018

General situation

Prosperity rating

Tajikistan was ranked 102nd in the world prosperity ranking for 2017, compiled by the British center "Legatum Institute".

According to the publication, best indicators of Tajikistan this year are in the field of "education" (54th place), "safety and security" (49th).

Low indicators of Tajikistan are in the field of "Personal freedom" (138th place), Management (120th place), Environment (123rd place), Business environment (117th place).¹

The rating includes 148 countries and one Chinese administrative district.

In 2016, the researchers of the "Legatum Institute" ranked the Republic as 100 of the world prosperity rating.

Russia is the "neighbor" of Tajikistan, and is on 101st place. Kazakhstan occupies 72nd position, Kyrgyzstan - 82nd place, Belarus 95th place.

The top three leaders are Norway, New Zealand and Finland.

The results of the researchers are based on comparative assessment of a number of indicators distributed across nine separate groups: quality of the economy, business environment, public administration, education, health, security and security, personal freedoms, social capital and environment.

The world prosperity index of the British analytical center "Legatum Prosperity Index" is a combined indicator that measures the achievements of the countries in terms of their prosperity and well being. It is issued since 2006. The aim of the study is to assess public welfare and its development on a global scale.²

Freedom House: Situation with democracy in Tajikistan had severely aggravated

International human rights organization Freedom House had published its annual report, ranking the condition with civil and political freedoms in 195 countries of the world. The authors consider that over the last decade the situation with democracy in 30 countries of the world, including Tajikistan had aggravated significantly.

Tajikistan gained 11 points out of 100 necessary over the last ten years and had quit the group of "partially free countries" entering the list of "not free" according to the report.

The research report "Freedom in the world 2018: the crisis of democracy" states the only 88 (45%) of countries covered by the research can be considered free. 58 countries (or 30%) are considered "partially free" and 49 countries (or 25%) are unfree, among them Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.³

Human Rights Watch:

In its new report for 2017, Human Rights Watch (HRW) notes that the human rights situation in Tajikistan has deteriorated significantly over the year. Authors of the report note that in Tajik prisons there are more than 150 political activists, independent journalists and human

¹Source: http://prosperitysite.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/3515/1187/1128/Legatum_Prosperty_Index_2017.pdf

² Source: <http://avesta.tj/2017/12/04/tadzhikistan-zanyal-102-mesto-v-rejtinge-protsvetaniya-sredi-149-stran-mira/>

³ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28978684.html>, <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/20180117/tadzhikistan-not-free>

rights defenders who criticized the authorities. Tajik Coalition Against Torture also stated at least 90 cases of torture in 2016-17.

There are also 20 journalists who fled the country because of persecution and threats. HRW noted that the Tajik authorities deliberately restrict free access to information by punishing visitors to "undesirable" Internet resources, as well as creating special registers of books that can not be imported or exported from the country.⁴

Poverty line

The level of extreme poverty decreases every year in Tajikistan. Nonetheless due to reduction in remittances of labor migrants, growth of external debt and instability of the banking system, the rate of poverty reduction is lower than the forecasts of the government and international organizations.

According to the World Bank report on the situation in Tajikistan, 14% of Tajik population is in extreme poverty. Extreme poverty occurs when residents can not always afford necessary food.

However, according to official data, the poverty rate in the country had decreased by one percent in comparison to the last year.

About 30% of Tajikistan's population is below the poverty line. Almost half of this number can not afford the most necessary items. Another 15% spend up to 2/3 of their earnings on food. Basically, these are large families without higher education and the opportunity to travel abroad.

According to the economist Alisher Rajabov, "to fully assess the whole picture, it is necessary to consider non-monetary aspects of poverty, such as access to education, medicine, and access to some public services - water supply, uninterrupted electricity." All these indicators are very important. indicates that in Tajikistan, non-monetary poverty is still very high, and two-thirds of people are belonging to the category of non-monetary poverty index.⁵

Situation with corruption

According to a new report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), corruption in Tajikistan remains a key problem along with poverty and must be addressed through meaningful actions.

The monitoring report "Anticorruption Reforms in Tajikistan" was presented to the public on December 7-8, 2017 during the visit of OECD experts in Dushanbe.

Over the past three years, Tajikistan has conducted many activities to raise awareness of the corruption risks. A new Code of Ethics for civil servants has been adopted; The new collegial coordinating body was created under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan - National Council for Combating Corruption, the Agency's capacity for state financial control and combat against corruption has been strengthened. In addition, the Government conducts regular research on corruption, however, the results show that the level of corruption remains very high.

The OECD report notes that anti-corruption legislation and institutions remain weak.

For example, no significant changes were made to Tajik legislation to fully criminalize corruption in accordance with international standards. State employees, investigators and prosecutors, as well as judges are open to political influence. The level of undisclosed information, including that related to public procurement, remains very high, and cooperation with civil society is very weak. Dialogue with the business community is often conducted formally, with the exception of working groups with business representatives that were established by the State Investment Committee.

An in-depth analysis of the land administration report shows how a weak national anti-corruption system in Tajikistan provides fertile ground for corruption behavior in this sector at the local level. Land use rules are unclear, and local authorities have unlimited powers. There is no system aimed to record causes of refusals to allocate land. The rate of rent for the land plot and

⁴ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28984679.html>

⁵ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28973449.html>

many other decisions are taken by direct negotiations between local authorities and citizens. Information on available land plots is not open to potential users, and land use rights are granted without an open tender. The State Committee for Land Management and Geodesy of the RT has adopted its own anti-corruption program and regularly visits local authorities to review complaints. However, these measures do not address the causes of corruption, so fundamental revision of land use legislation and transformation of land management agencies are needed, according to the authors of the report.⁶

In the "Corruption Perceptions Index: A Closed Circle of Corruption and Inequality Should Be Broken", published by Transparency International last June, Tajikistan was ranked 152nd out of 175 countries. Experts of the organization noted that corruption is widespread across all the levels of Tajik society.

Local analysts believe that it is impossible to eradicate corruption in the coming decades in Tajikistan.⁷

The Chamber of Accounts of Tajikistan accused the leadership of the Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting under the Government of the country of misuse of budgetary funds.

"In 2015, 948 thousand somoni (more than \$ 100 thousand) were allocated from the state budget for housing construction for employees of the State TV and Radio Broadcasting Company. But these funds were misused. According to the results of the tender and contract for the performance of contract works in October 2015, the entire amount was transferred to the accounts of Jamil LTD, said Deputy Chairman of the Audit Chamber Zafar Azimi during the press conference on November 22. According to him, in total during the checks conducted in the Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting under the government, misuse of funds were identified for the amount of 2.7 million somoni.

The management of State Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting refused to comment the statement of the Chamber of Accounts. But one of the employees of the financial department under condition of anonymity said that the amount announced by the Chamber of Accounts was spent to finalize the construction of TV "Varzish" (TV-Sport), "Sinamo" TV and the Media Academy building. He acknowledged that 948 thousand somoni were allocated from the state budget for housing construction for employees of the State Broadcasting.⁸

Freedom of conscience

The United States included Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to 10 countries "of particular concern" in connection with violations of freedom of conscience and the suppression of religious freedoms.

In April 2017, the US Commission on Freedom of Religion in the World (USCIRF) called Tajikistan "a country of particular concern" in the matters related to ensured freedom of religion. Burma (also Myanmar), China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan entered "top ten" countries of violent religious freedom violations.

The authors of the report wrote that the practice of persecution of citizens for religious reasons is ongoing in Tajikistan - the law on religion restricts the rights of Muslims to pray in mosques, at home, in the cemeteries and holy places. Last year, Tajik officials, under the pretext of fighting extremist views, installed more cameras and metal detectors in mosques. Persons under the age of 35 do not have the right to make a haj (pilgrimage), the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan controls not only the appointment of imam-hatibs, but also

⁶ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/laworder/20171209/oesr-tadzhikistan-dolzhen-obespechit-prinyatie-antikorrupcionnih-mer-vedutshih-k-konkretnim-deistviyam>

⁷ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28989036.html>

⁸ <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28990192.html>

preaching in mosques, according to the report. Ismaili Muslims can hold public religious meetings only at the Ismaili Center in Dushanbe.⁹

Mass Media Council of Tajikistan

Shahlo Akobirova, head of Public Organization “Homa” was elected as a new head of the Mass Media Council of Tajikistan.

She replaced Khurshed Atovullo in this function. Selection session of the Mass Media Council took place on 2 of December, members of the Council, journalists, editors and other media organizations took part in the session. Mass Media Council is an independent journalist organization that is dealing with protection of the rights of journalists and conducts analysis of the reports to ensure compliance to professional ethics.

Previously the Mass Media Council was headed by Zinnatullo Ismoil, Kironsho Sharifzoda and Nuriddin Karshiboev.¹⁰

“Award of the Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law”

In December 2017, Shakhlo Akobirova was awarded by the PO Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law in the nomination “For Active Civic Position in Journalism”. Khoma, the organization headed by Shakhlo in the only organization in Tajikistan that promotes introduction of digital broadcasting, thus allowing to fully ensure the constitutional rights of citizens to information.

Key nomination, “Best Human Rights Activist of 2018” was awarded to Lola Nasriddinova head of Public Organization IRODA (Initiative of Parents of Children with Autism).

Nomination for “Specific contribution of the organization in promotion of human rights” was awarded to Public Organization Independent Center on Human Rights which is also supporting local mass media among other activities.¹¹

Access to Information

On behalf of the President of Tajikistan, state structures are required to report to mass media twice a year. Previously press conferences with Ministries and Agencies were held once a quarter, such meetings were providing good opportunity to journalists to ask their question directly to the management.

However, according to journalists, recently such press conferences are held with the participation of deputy ministers who, within the allocated time, report only on achievements, and only 10 minutes are devoted to thematic issues.

"I will not comment", "I am a civil servant, I can not", "Leave me alone, why should I have an extra headache?", "Please ask others", "Write an official request to the leadership", - these are the key phrases used by the representatives of official structures when journalists call them.

Some representatives of state structures, which were recently opened with the media, now avoid journalists. "My name often flickers in journalistic materials, I'm like a white crow," one official explained.

An ex-minister of one of the spheres, a professional of his business who was recently open and commented on topical issues of the economy, Radio Ozodi recently announced: "It also became difficult for us, they say, do not expose yourself. So I better refrain from commenting. "

Similar responses of civil servants are encountered in their daily activities by other Tajik journalists.

Heads of independent media argue that in recent years, getting information from state structures has become very difficult. There are situations when it takes weeks to confirm the information, but in the end the journalist's question remains unanswered. Media representatives

⁹ <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28955311.html>

¹⁰ <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28891987.html>

¹¹ <http://www.bhr.tj/news/lucsim-pravozasitnikom-goda-v-2017-godu-priznana-osnovatel-i-ispolnitelnyi-direktor>

consider that some civil servants occupying responsible posts are not sure of their competence and therefore avoid journalists.

Khurshed Atovullo, the editor-in-chief of Farazh, said in an interview to Radio Ozodi: "Some officials are completely incompetent in matters which they have to deal with. Therefore, they do not want to communicate with journalists. "

He also noted that in the press centers of some ministries and departments there are random people who can not perform their duties in full. Instead of helping journalists in organizing interviews with top officials of the ministry, they create real obstacles to meet with the officials. The situation has come to the extent that some press secretaries of state institutions are asking not to indicate their name in regard to a particular commentary.¹²

Web pages blocking

The State Agency on Communication under the Government of Tajikistan closed access to the site of the weekly newspaper Tojikiston - tajikistantimes.tj in mid-January 2018.

Employees of the newspaper reported that for the past two days without any prior notifications the site is blocked by the Communications Agency.

Moreover, according to them, the agency had announced sale of the domain tajikistantimes.tj along with other domains: get.tj, ism.tj, nic.tj.

"It happened even though the newspaper Tojikiston paid for the ownership of this domain until 2030," informed representatives of the newspaper.

They noted that repeated attempts to find out the reason for the blocking of the newspaper domain were unsuccessful.

The Tojikiston newspaper is part of the media holding Oila, owned by Sharif Hamdampur. Site tajikistantimes.tj, since 1999 was published under the domain pressa.tj, is one of the first information portals of Tajikistan.¹³

According to media reports, a few days after the block, the site of Tojikiston newspaper was accessible again. Agency on Communication under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan reported that the suspended access to tajikistantimes.tj was related to technical problems. "Once the problems were fixed, the site was operational again and is working now the site as usual."¹⁴

However, on January 22, 2017, when attempting to open the page error page is loaded and the site is still unavailable.

Suspension on NGN connection

In December 2017, all cellular operators and Internet providers in Tajikistan received a letter from the Agency on Communications under the Government of Tajikistan with the request to disable NGN-services. Why should companies abandon the demand for communication? In this letter, officials did not explain, but a little earlier, in September, Tax Committee of Tajikistan sent a letter to the President of the country, justifying the expediency of blocking messengers and NGN.

This letter stated that the huge share of international negotiations is carried out through mobile operators and Internet messengers Viber, IMO and Skype. This fact, according to the tax authorities, was the reason for the decrease in volume of tax payments and budgetary revenues.

This letter was received by the Office of the President on October 2, 2017, until now there has been no official response from high-ranking officials to the incoming proposal. But NGN has already been disabled.¹⁵

¹² Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28973728.html>

¹³ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180116/sluzhba-svyazi-zakrila-dostup-k-saitu-gazeti-tochikiston-i-vistavila-ee-domen-na-prodazhu>

¹⁴ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180118/sluzhba-svyazi-dostup-k-saitu-gazeti-tochikiston-bil-zakrit-po-tehnicheskoi-prichine>

¹⁵ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20171227/dhl-ngn-svyaz-i-utrennii-plov-chto-etshe-mipoteryali-v-2017-godu>

In January 2018, only Telecom Technologies resumed the Next Generation Network (NGN) telephony. Mobile applications of IP telephony of Tcell and Beeline, as well as "Babilon-M", are also available for users. The official document allowing the companies can resume IP telephony services is not yet available.

Representatives of "Telecom Technology" told "AP", that NGN services were again available to their subscribers after the company received "approval" to resume services from the Agency on Communications. "Our NGN operates in the same mode and supports both local and foreign IP," according to the source.

The Agency on Communications revoked the license for NGN-telephony on December 18, 2017, referring to security issues. Before that, NGN services in Tajikistan were provided by the companies "Eastera", "Intercom", "Babilon", etc. IP-telephony services of these companies are not yet available to subscribers.

On January 2, 2018, an official request from the General Prosecutor's Office was sent to the telecom operators obliging to provide detailed answer on how the subscribers of Tajikistan were provided with the NGN service and on which grounds providers had disconnected it.

General Prosecutor Office, informed "AP" that clarification on the reasons for disconnection of NGN continues. "As far as I know, NGN service is not yet restored for subscribers. Our check is also ongoing, and in the coming weeks we will provide a report on its results," added the representative of the General Prosecutor Office. The source refrained from providing other details.

Until December 18, NGN services were also provided by "Eastera", "Intercom", "Babilon-T" companies. These companies have not yet restored IP-telephony to subscribers.¹⁶

Block of Viber messenger

On January 4, 2018 the most popular messenger Viber was partially blocked in Tajikistan, Viber users in Tajikistan could not make audio and video calls. It was only possible to send text messages.

Audio and video calls on Viber were impossible for users of almost all cellular operators and providers. This was confirmed by "AP" sources in several telecom operators. This was also confirmed by users of social networks who had indicated that Viber is partially limited: a beep to a voice call goes, but as soon as the interlocutor tries to answer, the call is on reset.

Audio and video calls on Viber were available only through anonymizers, including through free VPN applications, which can be downloaded and installed on mobile phones and personal computers.

Meanwhile, as several sources in the telecom companies told AP, partial blocking of Viber was ordered by national operator "Tajiktelecom", which at the moment provides Internet to all providers.

"We were ordered to buy Internet from" Tajiktelecom "a few months ago. We did not have a choice," a source in one of the companies said.

To date, Viber is considered the most popular messenger in Tajikistan. Audio calls of other messengers, including IOM, Telegram, WhatsApp, are still available.

In mid December, Agency on Communications issued the verbal instruction to consider means to block messengers in the country. The Agency associated this need with security. Later, Tax Committee of Tajikistan sent a letter to the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, in which the feasibility of blocking messengers and NGN is seconded. In a letter dated September 27, 2017 and signed by the head of the Tax Committee Nusratullo Davlatzoda, it is said that the huge share of international negotiations is carried out through mobile operators and Internet messengers Viber, IMO and Skype. This fact, according to the tax authorities, was the reason for the decrease in the volume of tax revenues and profits in the budget.

¹⁶ Source: <https://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180110/v-tadzhikistane-snova-zarabotal-ngn-ne-u-vseh-operatorov>

Since December 18, NGN services have been suspended in Tajikistan. In the first days of January 2018, General Prosecutor Office of Tajikistan questioned legitimacy of switching off NGN-telephony in the republic. General Prosecutor Office required mobile providers to outline detailed answer on the modalities for providing NGN service and the grounds for the suspension of the service.¹⁷

At present, audio and video calls are again available for Viber users in Tajikistan. The Agency on Communications blamed it on technical problems and noted that it was not related to the global failure of the Viber itself. According to a source in the Agency, this was due to technical problems inside Tajikistan.¹⁸

Complaints of journalists

Journalist of Dune FM radio from Istravshan had lodged a complaint against the director of the radio station. Muhabbat Juraeva lawyer of the journalist had informed Sogdnews on this fact. The lawyer noted that the journalist from Dune FM radio station from Istravshan Mahinbonu Ataeva had lodged a court file against the director of this radio station Nazir Tursunov.

Dune FM radio was established on 1 of January 2015 by the initiative of Mahinbonu Ataeva and she was working ever since as editor in chief of this radio. On 4 September 2017 the founder of Dune FM radio Nazir Tursunov informed journalist that she is fired without stating any reasons. Journalist was approaching the founder several times to get her job back, however the efforts were in vain hence she lodged a court case on 4 October 2017.

“Founder of the Dune FM radio station of Istravshan Nazir Tursunov had violated the article 30 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Tajikistan” - informed M. Juraeva who is also a lawyer of NANSMIT in Sogd province.

This is the second court case filed by the journalist in the northern part of the country.

To remind, in the first case poet and reporter from “Tojikiston” newspaper in Penjikent Ismail Zarifi had lodged a court case against JE “Zerafshan” in Penjikent town.¹⁹

Criminal persecution of journalists

On December 5, 2017, well-known Tajik journalist and captain of the Youth Team "Tajikistan Team" Khairullo Mirsaidov was detained by the prosecutor's office. For three days the reason for the detention was unclear, later prosecutor's office announced the initiation of a criminal investigation of a false denunciation, embezzlement, forgery of documents and the incitement of national, racial, local or religious hostility.

Khairullo Mirsaidov is an independent journalist and political observer for the past 17 years. In different years he worked for Radio Deutsche Welle, Asia-Plus and other media, wrote on human rights, touched on the problems of environment and national minorities. Prior to the detention, he was a captain of the Youth team "Team Tajikistan".

On December 8, Khairullo was prosecuted under four articles of the Criminal Code of Tajikistan: article 245, part 4, paragraph "b" (appropriation or embezzlement), 189, part 2, item "g" (national, racial, local or religious enmity), 340, Part 1 (forgery, manufacture or sale of forged documents, state awards, stamps, seals, forms), 346, part 2, item "a" (knowingly false denunciation).

On the same day, the court took preventive measure against him by approving the arrest.

¹⁷ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180104/v-tadzhikistane-chastichno-zablokirovali-viber>

¹⁸ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180108/sluzhba-svyazi-podverdila-vremennoe-otklyuchenie-viber-na-territorii-tadzhikistana>

¹⁹ Source: <http://sugdnews.tj/ru/razd/slayd/2209-zhurnalistka-podala-v-sud-na-direktora-radio.html>

The worst article out of those he is alleged to violate is the incitement of national, racial, local or religious hostility. Perhaps some joke, voiced by the team might have seemed to someone unsuccessful.

According to the senior assistant to the province prosecutor Gulchekhira Gaibnazarova, the case was initiated on the basis of available materials on the Internet, which Mirsaidov himself wrote and on the basis of the statement of the head of the Department for Youth and Sports of Sughd region Olim Zohidzoda. The detainee's father noted that they accuse Khairullo in "humiliating the dignity of Tajik people during his performances on the stage."

In November 2017, Mirsaidov said that the newly appointed head of the Department of Youth and Sports of Sogd Oblast, Olim Zohidzoda, extorted a bribe of \$ 1,000 from him, and also inclined him to fraudulent activities with budget money allocated to the KVN team for the purchase of microphones. Zohidzoda in reply accused Mirsaidov of slandering and claimed that he was only trying to verify the legality of spending budget money.

In November 2017, Khairullo Mirsaidov appealed to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, the Prosecutor General Yusuf Rahmon and the Chairman of the Sogd Province Abdurahmon Kodiri with a request to pay attention to the problems faced by the team because of "corrupt officials of Sogd province." Khairullo Mirsaidov accused the head of the Department of Youth and Sports of Sughd region of lying.

On December 14, 2017, the source of the agency "Asia Plus" in the prosecutor's office specified that the accusation of false denunciation concerns exactly the situation with Olim Zohidzoda. "His claim that he was required to pay a bribe, which he was unable to prove, is now used against him, and serves as a basis for criminal case," explained the source. He did not comment on the rest of the charges.

At the same time, the lawyer signed a receipt on non-disclosure of information concerning the investigation of the criminal case against Mirsaidov.

The International Committee to Protect Journalists urged the leadership of Tajikistan to release independent journalist and captain of the Youth team, "Team of Tajikistan" Khairullo Mirsaidov. The corresponding appeal was posted on the committee's website on December 14.

"In countries where free media and critical remarks are almost non-existent, journalists like Mirsaidov deserve gratitude for important work, not fictitious accusations," said CPJ deputy executive director Robert Mahoney.

Earlier human rights organizations Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, as well as the British Ambassador to Tajikistan Hugh Philpott stated support to Mirsaidov.²⁰

"Tajik authorities did not provide any reliable evidence confirming the arrest of Mirsaidov for political reasons," according to the regional representative of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in Central Asia Marius Fossum in the statement Human Rights Watch published on the organization's website. "Khairullo Mirsaidov is well known and respected for his independent journalistic activities ... Such independent journalists like Mirsaidov should receive appreciation for their important work, rather than being arrested for daring to discuss corruption," the statement said.

It also notes that "the Government of Tajikistan must ensure the rights of Mirsaidov in custody, including freedom from ill-treatment and having access to a lawyer who must act immediately to ensure his release."

"In 2017, human rights situation in Tajikistan has deteriorated ... More than 150 political activists, including number of lawyers, remain unjustly imprisoned, and relatives of dissidents who peacefully criticize the government from outside the country are subjected to violent retaliation, including arbitrary detention , confiscation of passports and property ... ".

Over the past year, at least 20 journalists left the country, fearing prosecution for their professional activities, according to the statement.²¹

Meanwhile, Askar Tursunov, the lawyer of Khairullo Mirsaidov, detained on December 5, told AP that his client "does not complain on the conditions of his detention and his state of health." Tursunov did not mention other details of his communication with his client. "I signed an obligation of non-disclosure of information concerning the investigation of Mirsaidov's criminal case, so I can not tell you anything," he stressed.

A source in the administration of the Sogd province informed media that in late October and early November 2017, as a result of an internal audit carried out by the Department of Youth and Sports of Sogd province, Mirsaidov's financial activities (as captain of the team "Tajikistan National Team", funded by the budget of the region) a shortfall in the amount of 16 thousand 800 somoni was identified. "This was reported to regional authorities, and due to this it was decided to invite Mirsaidov to the head of the region for further explanations.

However, during the conversation with representatives of the regional administration Mirsaidov, instead of the report, publicly stated that the head of the Department for Youth and Sports of Sogd Province Olim Zohidzoda demanded a bribe of \$ 1,000. After this statement Zohidzoda officially appealed to the prosecutor's office with a claim that Mirsaidov publicly slandered him," according to the source. Further, according to the source, during the audit of this statement, the prosecutor's office determined that the amount of Mirsaidov's financial shortfall is 26,000 somoni. In addition, it was identified that Mirsaidov forged some financial accounting documents.

In the course of further investigation it was found out that, according to the investigation, the amount of embezzlement or appropriation increased and Mirsaidov stole 300,000 somoni. According to a source in the prosecutor's office, it is possible that, by the end of the investigation, the amount will be even higher.²²

In the mean time, Khairullo himself, when meeting with his father in SIZO in Khujand, stated that he "did not violate the legislative norms".²³

In January 2018, a statement in support of Khairullo Mirsaidov and the Youth team of Tajikistan, signed by the director of KVN programs, Viktor Vdovichenko, the editor and leader of the Ala-Too League, Eldiyar Kenensarov (the KVN "Asia Mix" team), and the editor of the central league of Moscow and Moscow region Alexei Lyapichevym (team KVN "Nezolotaya molodezh"), posted on the website of the Moscow League of KVN. The signatories do not comment on the financial charges against Mirsaidov, however, on the charges under Article 189 part 2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tatarstan, they note that "Team jokes have never been aimed at inciting any enmity or discord, and the first person who was ensuring it was the head of the team himself".²⁴

Conviction of Journalists in Jabbor Rasulov district.

²¹ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/laworder/20171212/human-rights-watch-hairullo-mirsaidov-dolzhen-poluchit-priznanie-a-ne-bit-arestovannim>

²² <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/laworder/20180117/pochemu-hairullo-mirsaidov-ne-bil-osvobozhden-iz-pod-aresta-na-vremya-rassledovaniya>

²³ <https://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/laworder/20171228/otets-hairullo-mirsaidova-moi-sin-ne-priznaet-sebya-vinovnim>

²⁴ Source: <https://www.news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20180115/kvn-shutki-komandi-sbornaya-tadzhikistana-nikogda-ne-bili-napravleni-na-vozbuzhdenie-vrazhdi-ili-rozni>

Jabbor Rasulov district court of Sogd province had sentenced editor in chief of “Khukuk weekly” (“Rights”) Tursunali Aliev to 8 years and 10 months and 6 years in prison due to “Fraud” and “Blackmailing”. The imprisonment was replaced by a nominal sentencing of 2 years due to his age. He is 70 years old. Local journalistic organization had refused to support the sentenced.

According to the previous information father and son Alievs were also sentenced by the Ganchi district court for “deliberate damage caused to private property”, “arbitrariness” and “failure to comply with state authorities” according to the new Law on Amnesty they were able to avoid imprisonment by paying a big fine. New criminal case was initiated after numerous complaints of residents of Jabbor Rasulov districts.

According to the brother of Tursunali Aliev, father and son presented themselves as journalists and promised to settle down problems of local residents were taking money. Residents that were cheated by Oybek and Tursunali Alievs consider that the verdict of Jabbor Rasulov district court is too mild and are ready to complain in the court of higher instance.

Journalistic organizations of Sogd province refused to support the convicted considering that their activities contradict journalistic norms and ethics.²⁵

Cooperation

Republic of Tajikistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia discussed potential cooperation in the field of mass media and press.

According to the information department of the MFA of RT, ambassador of Tajikistan in Saudi Arabia Zarobiddin Kosimi met Director of Saudi Informational Agency Abdullo ibn Fahd Al-Khussein.

During the meeting, a constructive discussion on improved cooperation in the field of mass media and press was conducted as informed by the agency on foreign affairs.²⁶

Events:

Master class "PR: interaction with the media" was conducted by an employee of the company "MegaFon Tajikistan" at the Department of Journalism in Khujand State University named after B. Gafurov, in November 2017. Participants of the meeting reviewed theoretical and practical issues within the framework of the stated topic.

The first part of the master class was devoted to setting PR goals and objectives in working with media, as well as basic skills in project preparation. Then the participants analyzed in detail the typical mistakes of the PR-practice on the example of real situations. Vivid interest among the participants was caused by the use of an interactive presentation. Students watched a video in the framework of the "Business Expedition" project and recorded fully by a mobile phone. And in the end the expert from television, editor-in-chief of TRK "TANIN" Kudratullo Rahmatov told the students about the specifics of TV operations.

The presentation included examples of implemented PR projects and video materials prepared according to the results of the project. Due to practical examples, the students learned how to independently create and implement their own PR projects in the future! "- said head of the department of journalism at Khujand State University after B. Gafurov Dilbar Samadova.

One of the results of the meeting was an agreement on further cooperation between "MegaFon Tajikistan" with the university and organization of new master classes on "SMM: Promoting the image in social networks".²⁷

TV, Internet and Mobile connection

By the initiative of the Committee on TV and Radio Broadcasting under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan new TV channel “Shahnavoz” started its operations.

²⁵ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28896190.html>

²⁶ Source: <http://avesta.tj/2017/12/04/tadzhikistan-i-saodovskaya-araviya-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-smi/>

²⁷ Source: http://tajikistantimes.tj/news_rus/megafon-tadzhikistan-rasskazal-budushhim-zhurnalistam-o-pr/

The objective of the new television and music channel is to disseminate and develop Tajik music and to create necessary conditions for Tajik musicians and singers.

New TV channel "Shahnavoz" is based upon "Tajik Television" and shall broadcast on a separate channel 24 hours, mainly concerts and music programs.

Manuchehr Azizoda former editor in chief of "Subh" program on "Tajikistan" TV Channel is appointed as a director of the new channel.

It shall be noted that TB channel "Tajikistan", "Safina", "Bahoriston", "Jahonamo", "Varzish", "Cinamo", "Football" are established during the period of independence. New TV Channel "Shahnavoz" is considered the eight Tajik channel.²⁸

Internet

As a form of communication, Internet technology appeared in Tajikistan in mid-1990s, when the international organization CADA launched the first e-mail center in Dushanbe and a number of other major cities.

In December 1999, the first access to the global network was provided by the company Telecom Technology. Now few people will remember that in those days the connection was only over the lines of the telephone network and was carried out by dial up software. The speed of 16 kb/s was considered very good, and files of only a few megabytes in size, which are now downloaded in a matter of seconds, were transmitted for 10-15 minutes.

For a long time internet remained a service of elite, accessible only to a limited part of the population and large corporations, both due to high prices for the service, and inability of Internet providers to provide communication in remote regions of the country.

The Internet revolution in Tajikistan took place in 2005, when for the first time mobile communication standard 3G (UMTS, CDMA 2000) was successfully introduced and tested. In a few years, the number of mobile Internet users has grown from a few to thousands of subscribers to 2-3 million subscribers. This time experts call the "golden period" of the development of the "tajnet".

The management of the sector has changed many times, and the methods of regulating the market have changed. In 2010, after Beg Zukhurov was appointed as the Chairman of the Agency of Communication Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, the providers were forced to block Internet resources, web pages that published critical materials about the country's leadership - centrasia.ru, ferghana.ru and ariana. su. In the following years, local resources were also blocked - asiaplus.tj, avesta.tj, tojnews.tj, and soon, the blocks became "fanatic" and periodically affected a wide variety of sites, including such popular ones as Facebook, Viber and Wikipedia.

According to observers, for all these 18 years, the mailing and search engines of Russia - Mail.ru and Yandex.ru - have not been blocked, and this is explained by the fact that many high-ranking officials and state agencies of Tajikistan used these postal systems in their work.

One of the reasons for the deterioration in relations between the regulator, the Agency on Communications and private operators, is the failure to accept the idea of creating a single communications center, unified super-gateway through which all megabytes must enter and leave the country and back. Human rights activists called such a project an attempt to introduce global censorship, the authorities called it an attempt to take control of the terrorism and improve the technical aspects, and providers considered it a desire to monopolize one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy.

According to independent expert Abdumalik Kadyrov, "now Internet opens up enormous opportunities for the democratization of society. This is a direct link between the population and the authorities. Through criticism, the authorities have the opportunity to understand what is currently bothering the public and take the necessary measures. If earlier traditional mass media played this role and they were called "the fourth power", then we can say that Internet is the "fifth

²⁸ Source: http://tajikistantimes.tj/news_rus/v-tadzhikistane-obrazovan-novyy-televizionnyy-kanal-shahnavoz/

power". The expert calls the blocking of unwanted sites or social networks an error and compares it with the action of a person ready to break a mirror just because he does not like reflection.

Talat Numanov, Executive Director of the Center for Information and Communication Technologies, believes that despite the availability of some good specialists in the field of communications in the country, there is still a lot to do to create a network of IT professionals in Tajikistan.

The once leading rate of Internet penetration among the population in recent years have been lost, and Tajikistan increasingly began to flash in anti-ratings on the freedom of access to the global network.

Various administrative measures that have replaced the market regulation in the industry have led to a drop in the quality of services among number of providers, and there are always complaints voiced by people in social networks and forums.

The world is on the verge of opening a new standard for 5G communication, while 4G is still poorly implemented in Tajikistan, and fiber-optic lines, designed to provide consumers with inexpensive and high-speed Internet, are also underdeveloped.

According to the management of communication companies voiced repeatedly, until the regulator of the sector becomes an independent center and starts working according to generally accepted market rules, further development of the Internet is impossible.

Obviously, all this is also understood in the Tajik government, but now the issues of state security and political stability in terms of regulating access to a global network for them are more important than social and economic benefits.²⁹

In January 2018, Agency on Communications under the Government of Tajikistan instructed all providers to purchase Internet exclusively from the Republican data transmission network operating under the trademark Tojnet and owned by the state telecommunications operator OJSC Tajiktelecom. Prior to this, providers purchased Internet in Kyrgyzstan and other countries. These measures are justified by ensuring security in the country.

Mobile operators have expressed dissatisfaction with this order, since earlier they purchased the Internet outside of the country much cheaper, and now this sphere is monopolized by the state structure.

The Chief Specialist of the Agency on Communication said on January 12 in the interview to Radio Ozodi on condition of anonymity that several mobile operators are already receiving the Internet through the channel of the Republican network. According to him, "Tojiktelecom" and other companies are connected to this channel, however, he did not name them. "The Agency on Communication sent official letters to providers, outlining the new order for swift implementation," the source said.

Tajik authorities have repeatedly stated that all measures to control the telecommunications and Internet are aimed to preventing radicalization of society, but some experts believe that Agency on Communications pursues economic benefits by becoming a monopolist in the field of Internet traffic. In addition, the regulator will have another tool for pressure on mobile companies and Internet providers.

Chairman of the Association of Mobile Operators of Tajikistan Gafur Irkayev believes that the order is contrary to domestic and international laws. According to him, this issue will be discussed during the session of the Council of Mobile Operators.

In 2016 Tajik authorities created a single switching center to control incoming and outgoing traffic of international telecommunications services and the Internet under the state operator "Tajiktelecom". The establishment of the such switchboard (UCC) had cost the country \$ 50 million. And in this case, the authorities claimed that the UCC was established to ensure security and reinforce the combat against terrorism and extremism.³⁰

²⁹ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28924853.html>

³⁰ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28973918.html>

Mobile connection

From now on, only mobile providers can sell SIM cards in Tajikistan. According to the statement from the Agency on Communication under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, this is an attempt to put an order to the sales of SIM cards.

A spokesman for the Agency on Communications said on January 4, 2017, on a condition of anonymity, that licenses of dealers for the sale of SIM cards were withdrawn. According to him, despite the warning and even fines, some dealers continued to sell sim cards, bypassing the established rules, i.e. to citizens without presenting passports.

From now on, one can buy a SIM card exclusively in the offices of mobile operators, which bear responsibility for this.

Until recently, about 100 dealer centers selling SIM cards operated in Tajikistan, 80 percent belonged to private entrepreneurs, the rest to mobile companies. The license for the activities of the dealer centers was issued by the Agency on Communications under the Government of Tajikistan. According to mobile operators, 80 percent of SIM cards were sold through dealer centers. In turn, the dealer centers had up to 10 thousand sub-dealers (agents performing intermediary operations on behalf of dealers and at their expense).

Law enforcement agencies claim that often members of terrorist groups use SIM cards registered to another person, and this makes it difficult to find or investigate a particular criminal case.

The campaign to re-register SIM cards was also associated with the fight against terrorism, which ended on April 30, 2017. Although representatives of mobile companies said that this is done to identify inactive SIM cards.

A SIM card is not just a tool that provides mobile communication between subscribers, it is a powerful source of information. According to experts, the accounts of users of social networks, e-mail addresses and bank accesses are tied to sim-cards and such information can be useful to terrorists and organized criminal groups.

In Tajikistan, there are four major mobile operators - Babilon, Megafon, Tcell and Beeline, total number of subscribers is 4 million 400 thousand people.³¹

³¹ Source: <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/28954387.html>