

Silk News Letter

Issue 6

June 2003

1. Introduction

The Silk News Letter is a monthly electronic news bulletin with an update on current issues regarding the Virtual Silk Highway project. The news bulletin first becomes available in English and within a few weeks a Russian translation is distributed. Older versions of the Silk News Letter can be obtained from the Silk web site: www.silkproject.org

2. Status of Silk sites

The technical problems with the local Silk nodes have still not been solved. The Silk ExCo and the Silk Board (that recently had a meeting) are very concerned about this persistent set back. The problem has been analysed by Kalitel (the manufacturer of the satellite dishes) and an additional filter for the dish has been developed. This new filter is currently been sent to the various Silk countries for installation. After further tuning of the system all installed nodes should be able to operate properly in the first decade of July.

The status per country being connected is as follows:

Azerbaijan: a few days after the inauguration of the Silk connection (May 2003) the transmitter problem struck here as well. Since then the Silk dish has not been in operation.

Kazakhstan: the equipment is finally being shipped to Almaty and is currently in customs. Within the next few weeks the dish will be installed and become operational.

Kyrgyz Republic: due to the transmit problem there is still only receive capacity. For the return channel AKNET makes use of the Moscow satellite connection that they also operate.

Tajikistan: operations are only possible after resetting the equipment at certain intervals.

Turkmenistan: the dish has arrived in Ashgabad and the rest of the equipment will soon follow.

The other sites (Armenia, Georgia and Uzbekistan) are not affected by the malfunctioning transmitter and take full advantage of the bandwidth that is being provided.

An overview of the June statistics of the operational countries:

(GB = Gigabyte, TB = TeraByte, kbps = kilobit per second)

Transmit Received Transmitted
bandwidth data data

Armenia: 192 kbps 16.6 GB 5.6 GB

Georgia: 704 kbps 403.0 GB 128.2 GB

Kyrgyz Rep. 0 406.0 GB 0

Tajikistan: 192 kbps 27.3 GB 9.2 GB

Uzbekistan: 800 kbps 538.8 GB 126.2 GB

Totals 1888 kbps 1.39TB 269.2 GB

It should be noted that the sites that are operational can count on a stable infrastructure without any significant outage. And also that Kalitel is working hard on a solution of the problems that have arised.

3. Third Silk Board meeting

From June 10 - 12 the third Silk Board meeting took place in Tbilisi Georgia. The NREN members of nearly all the Silk countries (Turkmenistan was absent), the Silk ExCo and various observers from OSI, the Worldbank, the Central Asian University and UNDP) attended the meeting.

Travel and lodging of the participants from the Silk countries was made possible by a grant from the OSI Foundation. GRENA, the Georgian NREN, was responsible for the local arrangements for the meeting and provided ideal circumstances for a fruitful meeting.

Of course the technical problems with the transmit units of the satellite dishes (discussed above) received quite a lot of attention during the meeting. The Silk countries have become dependant of the Internet connection that is being provided and the continued instability is proving to become a mayor problem within the countries.

Other issues worth mentioning are:

1. A part of the Silk Board meeting was reserved for the official inauguration of the Georgian Silk connection. The main event in this ceremony was a video-conference over the Silk infrastructure between Lord Robertson of NATO and President Shevardnadze of Georgia. The video-conference went very well and proved that the Silk infrastructure is capable of supporting high quality video applications.
2. After discussions during the Silk Board meetings in Almaty (June 2002) and Istanbul (February 2003) the governing structure of the Silk project was approved. The governing structure may be downloaded from the Silk web site.
3. The Silk Board has decided on the concept of the Silk logo. This concept was presented to the Silk Board and accepted on the condition that some additional redesign would take place. Within

a few weeks the Silk logo will be made public.

4. Although the current eight stations are not fully operational yet the Silk Board is already thinking about future regional extensions of the Silk infrastructure. During the meeting there was a presentation of a the Central Asia University initiative that aims at establishing a distributed university for the mountainous regions in Central Asia and neighbouring countries. Before the end of this year three regional cities in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan need Internet connectivity and co-operation with the Virtual Silk High project is a possible route to this goal. The Caucasus countries are already developing plans for regional connectivity and Uzbekistan is using landlines to connect the capitals of the various oblasts. Of course these extensions should be encouraged, but at the time time might prove to become a problem if the Silk bandwidth is not enlarged with funds from new partners. It was decided that the next Silk Board meeting will explicitly deal with regional connectivity.
5. The Silk project is more than providing an infrastructure: sustainability is the ultimate goal of the project. One of the activities in that supports this goal is education. The Silk ExCo unveiled their plans regarding the long term educational programme. Various donors are willing to support training and education activities if there is a general plan. The NATO Networking Panel has been asked to support the first technical training session that take place in Tashkent this fall.

The next Silk Board meeting will take place in Baku at the end of September, just before the Advanced Networking Workshop in the same city.

4. Silk news letter

The Silk News Letter began as a pilot project at the beginning of 2003. During the Istanbul meeting it was decided that the Silk News Letter, as well as the translation into Russian would be evaluated during the Tbilisi Silk Board meeting. As the feedback on the content of the News Letter has been positive it was

decided to continue the distribution of Silk related information by way of the news letter until circumstances demonstrate that there is no further need for the communication.

Silk project contact information:

Web page at: www.silkproject.org

Copy suggestions to: R.F.Janz@RC.RUG.NL
