

Silk News Letter

Issue 9

December 2003

1. Introduction

The Silk News Letter is an 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
The Silk News Letter appears every two months.

2. Status of Silk sites

On December 1 a scheduled upgrade of the bandwidth was effected. Besides this upgrade Georgia was able to achieve more transmit bandwidth as a result of extra budget from a NATO grant. In addition EurasiaSat has donated a small amount of extra bandwidth. This has led to a substantial increase of the available bandwidth, something that was quite needed as several of the larger countries are running into capacity problems as more universities and institutes become connected to the national infrastructure.

The current bandwidth parameters are:

East to west (transmit) bandwidth:

Yerevan.AM = 256 kbps
Ashgabad.TM = 128 kbps
Almaty.KZ = 256 kbps
Dushanbe.TJ = 256 kbps
Baku.AZ = 320 kbps
Bishkek.KG = 640 kbps
Tashkent.UZ = 800 kbps
Tbilisi.GE = 1056 kbps

West to East (receive) approximate bandwidth:

Broadcast (ip level) = 15 Mbps

Sites CIR = 1.9 Mbps

The CIR (Committed Information Rate) was implemented at the beginning of November and represents the minimum receive bandwidth that a country may rely on.

3. Status hardware problems

The status of the hardware of the Silk dishes is still reason for concern. The swap in Bishkek with a BUC (Bandwidth Upward Converter) of a new manufacturer has

led to better performance of the transmit channel at this site. However there are still other sites with malfunctioning BUCs. As this defect will only manifest itself at higher bandwidth there is still some time before the problem becomes critical again. The BUC issue is of constant concern of the Silk ExCo who hope to be able to resolve the problem before serious actions need to be taken.

4. The ninth Silk dish

It has been officially made public that Kabul (Afghanistan) will be the site where the ninth Silk dish will arise. In January Walter Kaffenberger (NATO) and Robert Janz (Univ. of Groningen) will visit Kabul to prepare the installation of the dish. Most of the equipment for this dish has already arrived at DESY in Hamburg and it is expected that the dish will be active in the first quarter of 2004. NATO is providing budget for the extra dish and CISCO is donating the network equipment.

5. Silk bandwidth prices

Several countries have approached the Silk ExCo with requests for extra bandwidth that will be paid from other sources than the Silk budget. The Silk ExCo has therefore defined the price of extra bandwidth. Any organisation who might want to buy bandwidth for a project that falls within the acceptable use of Silk may approach any member of the Silk ExCo for these prices.

6. ISOC grant

ISOC has provided the Silk ExCo with a grant of \$ 122,200 for the implementation of an educational programme in the first half of 2004. With this budget four workshops will be organised in the same manner as the Tashkent workshop that was discussed in the previous Silk News Letter, mentor missions between the Silk countries will be possible and several training certificates for Turkmen technicians are available. This generous donation from ISOC will truly strengthen the capabilities of the Silk NREN staffs.

7. NSRC donation

The Network Resource Startup Centre (www.nsrc.org) has donated more than \$ 14,500 to the Silk project. This budget has been made available by providing the NRENs with more than 150 books and equipment for wireless networks.

8. SPONGE

At the beginning of November there was a positive review of the EU funded SPONGE project. With the SPONGE budget several Silk related management and application issues are made possible. See the Silk web site for more information regarding SPONGE.

9. Silk publicity

In his speech at the Plenary session of the World Summit on the Information Society President Akaev of the Kyrgyz Republic mentioned the "Virtual Silk Highway" Project as very successful and an important project for the Kyrgyz Republic in helping to make digital information available.

On November 9th the Silk connection of Tajikistan was officially inaugurated in the presence of the NATO Networking Panel that was in Dushanbe for their fall meeting.

10. Human interest

Professor Vadim Navotny, technical director of the Uzbek NREN UzSciNet, has been honoured by President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan with the Shukhrat medal for his efforts in creating the national network for science and education in his country.

11. Future meetings

Venues and dates of next Silk Board meetings that have been decided on:

February 6 and 7 2004, Antalya (Turkey).

12. Final words for 2003

This ninth issue of the Silk News Letter is the last of 2003. In the previous year we have seen the Silk project grow from a stumbling toddler into a young adolescent with various growth pains. We hope that 2004 will bring Silk to full maturity, providing the necessary basis for sustainable NRENs in the whole Silk region.

The Silk ExCo wishes all readers of the News Letter, and especially the numerous supporters of the activities of the Silk project, a merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

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