

More Efficient, Objective and Interesting.

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Today in Central Asia, businessmen, journalists, scientists, students and even state bureaucrats are getting more and more of information from the Internet. Uzbekistan is not an exception.

Unlike the print media in Uzbekistan, which has to bring its contents in conformity with the demands of censors, the Internet cannot be censored. It's impossible to show its contents to the Committee for Protection of State Secrets (i.e. the censor) before anyone can look at it.

Information on the Internet is more real, trustworthy and contains more facts and analysis which is impossible to find in the print media. It is more likely to get a real picture of events in countries neighboring Uzbekistan or in Batken from the Russian and or other websites, than from the local press. These and other local events are covered superficially or not covered at all in the local press. If before, people would cling to foreign radio stations to learn the truth about the events at home, now they cling to monitors of computers to learn it.

Naturally, the authorities try to limit any uncontrolled forms of journalism. Already in 1998, the Uzbek government wanted to connect all the local Internet providers to a common government provider - "Uznet" - in order to make it easier for special services to observe who gets what kind of information from the world "library."

Another reason for using Internet by the population is the "real time" nature of information which appears there. Any information about local events can appear in daily papers only on the next day or the day after. In weeklies it appears after 5-6 days and in magazines even later. Live chats and user friendly presentation make it even more attractive.

According to a poll conducted by Pyramid Plus sociological group, 71 % of respondents get operative, economic information (market prices, stock exchange or currency information) from the Internet, 12 %- from newspapers, 10%- through their business partners and colleagues, and others through TV and radio. Besides, 62% of respondents stated that a real time information helps them to react to the changing market and correct their financial operations accordingly. Businessmen complained about the state press, which distorts and does not present the real economic picture of the country, and 15 % of them expressed willingness to connect to the Internet as soon as possible.

The Internet can penetrate to the most remote regions of the country, where daily papers are delayed for a month or do not reach at all.

The small circulation of economic and other newspapers, as well as their increasing costs and decreasing quality also contribute to the interest towards the Internet. As of the beginning of June "Business Vestnik Vostoka" had a circulation of 5.7 thousand, "Delovoy Partner Uzbekistana"- 2.3 thousand, "Narodnoe Slovo" - 7.1 thousand, "ECO"- 6 thousand,

“Nalogovie I Tamojennye vesti” - 20 thousand, “Pravda Vostoka”- 4 thousand. Only the papers like “Darakchi” (120 thousand), “Na postu” (about 80 thousand) and “Trud” (more than 100 thousand) have a high circulation and reach a broader audience.

The Internet in Uzbekistan still has a limited audience. Most of computers are located in the state and private offices and are inaccessible to the general public. Besides, according to the data provided by some computer companies in Uzbekistan, there are 100-150 thousand computers in the country, which belong to different generations. About 60 % of computers are old models with 286-386 or weaker processors. About 25 % have are 486 Mhz strong, and only 10 % have more or less modern “ Intel” inside. Owing to these situation even consumers who an access to computers, are not able to benefit from it the fullest.

Another problem is, one hour of work on the Internet is more expensive than purchasing a newspaper or magazine. With the price range of 40 to 385 soms for the newspapers, one hour of work on the Internet costs 1200 sums or more.

The information war leaves the print media and goes to the Internet. Chechen guerillas, the official Russian mass media, the western experts, various hacker and virus attacks exploit the Internet accordingly, endangering the owners and users of information.

It is possible that in 5-7 years the Internet will dominate in Uzbekistan and will secure the right of readers to an access to information.