

Prishtina Insight

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Australian Surgeon Lifts Lid on Dark Side of Kosovo Conflict

Craig Jurisevic's memoir will shock many with its portrait of disorder and corruption – as well as heroism – behind the Kosovo war frontlines in 1999.

See Page 8-9

NEWS

Guard Injured in Explosion at Disputed Building

> page 4



BUSINESS

Highway Deal Signed Without Price Tag

> page 5

GUIDE

Trepca's Haunting Beauty

> page 10

FOOD & DRINK

Prishtina's new Indian Restaurant Reviewed

> page 10

FEATURE

Student's Headscarf Divides Kosovo Society

> page 7

NGO FOCUS

KRCT: A Voice for the Voiceless

> page 14



Kosovo Minister's Friends Flourish from Road Bonanza

A number of lucrative building contracts appear to have gone to friends and relatives of Fatmir Limaj – and to companies whose experience in the field appears to be limited.

By Lawrence Marzouk and Petrit Collaku

Companies associated with Kosovo's Transport Minister, Fatmir Limaj, are among those that made big profits from Kosovo's huge road-building programme in the past two years.

An investigation by BIRN's Prishtina Insight has uncovered that some firms, handed multi-million euro road-building contracts, also appear to have had little experience in the relevant field.

Prishtina Insight has also established that two multi-million euro tenders issued to a friend of Limaj's ought to have been disqualified, as the firms failed to provide the necessary documentation.

This newspaper has looked at every significant road tender issued by the Ministry of Transport and

Post-Telecommunications since 2007. Using this information, from Kosovo's official register of businesses, we have compiled a list naming the firms that won the 50 most lucrative contracts, the value of the tenders, the owners of the winning firms, the dates of the companies' creation and the size of their workforces.

Transport ministry official Endrit Shala has dismissed the list as the work of an "intelligence agency", however, and has claimed its publication formed part of a campaign to discredit Limaj.

The same official said he had records of the movements of Balkan Investigative Reporting Network journalists, the people they had met and the documents they had collected. When asked to explain the statement, he declined to elaborate.

The Ministry of Transport did agree to open its files on tenders to Prishtina Insight, although it later refused to allow the newspaper to look at the offers submitted by companies.

We asked for an interview with Minister Limaj, but he declined. Instead, Endrit Shala, chief of cabinet at the ministry and Limaj's right-hand man, said the minister had played no part in tenders awarded to his friends. He added that given Kosovo's small size, it was no surprise that "somebody knows someone".

"The tender process of the Ministry of Transport is very transparent. We respect all of the rules and procedures of the procurement rules of Kosovo," Shala said.

Limaj, a former high-ranking member of the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, was tried but cleared of

all charges at the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, ICTY, in 2005. One of the most popular politicians in the governing Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, he has been dogged by unsubstantiated accusations of corruption.

Our investigation established that Limaj's ministry awarded two large contracts to a close friend, Habib Morina, and handed the second-largest contract to date for a road-building project, worth 11 million euro, to another friend, his relative, Colonel Haxhi Shala.

Morina told Prishtina Insight his relationship had played no role in the tender processes while Col Shala said he was no longer an employee of the company, Delia Group, which won the contract.

continues page 2-3



city

Germia's 1.3 million euro Building Site

The future of the half-finished Administrative and Protocol Centre in Germia Park remains uncertain, despite the allocation of three million euro to complete the structure, Prishtina Insight has learnt...

page 6



business

Stability at Risk with Rising Unemployment

Every day for more than one week, Musa Gashi has been waiting near Bill Clinton Boulevard, Prishtina, for someone to offer him a job.

Near him are ten other manual labourers, hoping to find a job...

page 5

Kosovo Minister's Friends Flourish

from page 1

Kosovo has spent some 170 million euro on road-building projects in the last two years. The Ministry of Transport has absorbed a growing share of the budget, mainly as a result of the expansion of road-building projects.

In 2008, Limaj's budget was 139 million euro, more than 10 per cent of Kosovo's total budget of about 1.3 billion euro. In 2009, it rose to 160 million. The figure for 2010 is more modest at 124 million euro, but the ministry still receives the highest share of the budget of any ministry.

Limaj took over the ministry following November 2007 general elections and immediately set about connecting villages with new asphalted roads and rebuilding Kosovo's traffic arteries.

He told road-building companies they would have to work 24 hours a day and there would be enough work for all of them. According to the ministry, some 1,000 km of road were built in 2008 and 2009 as part of 200 projects.

But our research shows that more than one-third of the winning tenders were issued to firms that only registered after Limaj took up his position.

Given the poor state of roads at the time, the minister's dynamism and "no-nonsense" approach has attracted plaudits. An anti-corruption NGO, Cohu, in July 2008 noted that he had "undertaken great efforts to build new roads".

But complaints have arisen over the quality of the new roads, which critics suggest require regular repair. A separate but related complaint is that tenders have been awarded corruptly and often to unqualified firms.

Friends and relatives:

Most tenders for road construction are issued by the Ministry of Transport, although municipalities also commission work. Bids are awarded on the basis of the lowest price or under a weighted system, including criteria such as the technical quality of the tender proposal. This evaluation is carried out by a procurement board within the issuing authority.

The second-largest contract issued to date by the ministry, worth 11 million euro, was handed in July 2009 to an Albanian firm, Delia Group. This was to build a five-km section of main road from the airport to the western city of Peja.

This firm was registered in Kosovo in January 2009, with the Albanian company owner, Viktor Delia, and another man, Haxhi Shala, of Prishtina, listed as "authorised persons" to operate in Kosovo on the company's behalf.

Limaj and Haxhi Shala are closely connected. According to ICTY records, they are relatives, attended school together and lived together in the 1990s after they both left Kosovo for Switzerland. They returned to Kosovo together to fight with the KLA. Shala, a colonel in the Kosovo Security Force, Kosovo's putative army, regularly attends commemorative events with Limaj.

When Prishtina Insight contacted him, Shala said he did not work for Delia Group, suggesting the listing of his name was "a mistake". He



A newly laid road, south of Lake Batlava. Some experts complain of poor quality asphalt.

suggested we contact the owners, which he knew to be the "Delia brothers".

Minutes later, a staff member of Delia Group telephoned to confirm that Shala had worked for the firm but was no longer with them, owing to "staff changes." He suggested we speak to the owner, Viktor Delia, but he has not returned our calls.

The minister's advisor, Endrit Shala, explained that Haxhi Shala was probably associated with the firm because the colonel "used to live" at the address of Delia Group.

But when Prishtina Insight showed the advisor a copy of the firm's entry in the business register, which lists Haxhi Shala as one of

the firm's "authorised persons", he offered no other explanation.

The tender was open to all bidders and was awarded as a result of being "the most economically advantageous" offer, which means that the procurement board had to weigh up different criteria, including price, quality, and other issues, before deciding the winner.

The board said Delia Group's 11.8 million euro bid was the best, even though one firm submitted a lower price of 11.5 million euro.

During the limited time provided to Prishtina Insight to check the evaluation report of the offers, the process appeared to have been carried out properly.

Prishtina Insight has also established that another friend of the minister's, Habib Morina, also from Malisheve, won two major road tenders, worth 5.8 million and 4.5 million euro respectively. The information was obtained from tender award documents and the company's entry on Kosovo's business register.

Morina's firm, Patroni, best known as owners of a chain of petrol stations, won a 4.5-million-euro contract to build the road from Arllat to Xerxe in the Malisheve region in September 2008 as part of a consortium.

An audit of the ministry's accounts by the Auditor General for that year revealed that another bidder offered to do the same work for less. The ministry said it chose Morina's consortium because it scored maximum points for "technical criteria".

However, the auditors wrote that they detected "no big advantage" on technical grounds between Morina's bid and the cheaper, rival offer. The ministry has not responded to requests for an explanation.

The audit also revealed that another company in the Patroni consortium, Jehona, failed to meet the guidelines for applying because it

did not submit an audit report for 2007. As a result, the whole consortium should have been disqualified from the tender.

Morina's AHN Group, meanwhile, won a major road tender in July 2009, worth 5.8 million euro, to build part of the road to Mitrovica, as part of a consortium with Timi Krsko, a Slovenian-based firm whose owners also come from Malisheve. Again, Morina succeeded, although his offer was not the lowest in price.

This is technically acceptable, as the rules for the tender stipulated that the "most economically advantageous" company would be selected – not necessarily the company offering the lowest-price bid.

However, according to the procurement board's evaluation of the offers, which Prishtina Insight has seen, the AHN Group and Timi Krsko failed to provide key documents, including copies of contracts certifying the value of work their firms had undertaken in the past three years and details of their technical staff. Failure to submit such documents usually leads to bids being disqualified.

Morina denies his success in obtaining contracts owes anything to his friendship to the minister. "I

The Road Building Bonanza: This table includes all major road tenders awarded by the Ministry of Transport since 2007 over the value of 2million euro.

Contract Name	Tender award Date	Lot	Name of winning contractor	Value of contract in Euro	Address	Directors/Staff	Constitution Date	Workforce
EXTENSION OF THE ROAD M9, SECTION SLLATINË-GJURGJICE	10/7/2009	Lot 1B	Ge Group	9301986.4	Prizren	Remzi Bilalli, Hysni Gjyliqi, Naser Krasniqi, Ilir Shehu	12/2/2008	10
			Vëllezërit e Bashkuar		Prizren	Hazer Susuri, Qamil Susuri, Isak Susuri, Jakup Susuri, Sefer Susuri, Faik Susuri, Muharrem Susuri, Mevlan Susuri, Hajdar Susuri, Atnan Susuri, Tajar Susuri, Kadri Susuri, Zenun Susuri, Ramadan Susuri Sahit Bytyçi	19/12/2003	50
		Lot 2B	Drini Company	8739136.21	Prizren	Agron A. Kastrati, Avdi Xh. Kastrati, Milaim Gashi, Shafi Gashi	10/4/2007	120
			ARD Group		Malisheve	Avdyli Hoxha, Avni Mazreku, Yiber Shamolli	10/10/2008	10
		Lot 1C	Eurokos	6177008.16	Caglavica Pristina		22/01/2008	36
			Burimi		Malisevo	Rizah Morina; Agim Morina, Nuredin	21/3/2006	3
		Lot 2C	Delia Group	11760439.84	Prishtina	Viktor Delia, Tiranë, and Haxhi Shala Pristina	19/1/2009	NA
					Lot 3C	Granit	6462300.44	Istok
		Lika Trade	Decani	Sali Likaj, Fadil Likaj	18/9/2006	5		
		Malsija	Istok	Zef Malsija	2/6/2006	8		
CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE BRIDGES ON THE WIDENING OF NATIONAL ROAD M9, SECTION GJURGJICE-SLLATINË	13/7/2009	LOTI 6	GETOARI	687581.93	Prizren	Naim Besimi, Omer Besimi	17/10/2006	70
		LOT 7	NDËRTIMI	2300761.14	Malisheve	Sabit Zabelaj	5/3/2004	5
			EUROFAMIS		SUHAREKË	Fatmir Bytyçi, Muhamet Bytyçi, Besnik Bytyçi, Burim Bytyçi	1/8/2008	40
		Lot 8	FAMIS CO	3762733.3	Suva Reka	Avdullah Bytyçi, Hamdi Bytyçi, Sinan Bytyçi, Fadil Bytyçi	2/12/2008	59
		Lot 9	DRENI INGINIERING	1640279.8	Skenderaj	Adnan Lushtaku	25/7/2003	3
EXTENSION OF THE ROAD M9 (PRISHTINA-PEJA) SECTION, CROSSROAD FUSHË KOSOVA-SLLATINË E MADHE, LOT1, LOT2, LOT3.(from km 0+000 to km 8+200)	29/7/2008	LOT 1	KAG ASPHALT	5,989,983.40	Prizren	Ramadan Gashi, Esad Gashi, Bashkim Maliqi, Besdrush Shyti, Rade Pilipović	22/7/2003	35
			HIDROELEKTRA		Zagreb		NA	NA
		Lot 2	ARJAK	8276744.58	Gjakove	Dukagjin Morina, Zef Morina, Nikollë Morina, Ruzhdi Kurtishaj, Rrok Gjoka	22/4/2005	6
EXTENSION OF THE ROAD M2, SECTION PRISHTINË-CROSSROAD (M2-R120)	10/7/2009	Lot 3	AHN GROUP	5792435.16	Kosovo Polje	Habib Morina, Agim Krasniqi, Nuhi Morina	29/10/2008	4
			TIMI KERSHKO		Malisheve/Slovenia	Agim Krasniqi, Osman Krasniqi, Ljubizda Malisheve, Sami Krasniqi, Vlaski Drenovac, Malisheve	NA	N/A
		Lot 4	RIVIERA & TONI COM	5746895.33	Pristina	Irakli Gjiçali, Himarë, Ardian Berila, Pristina, Dritan Çelaj	8/3/2009	13
		Lot 5	ALBA KONSTRUKSION	3917677	Albania	Xhavit Ismaili	N/A	N/A
PE-VLA-KU	Petrit Imeraj, Kujtim Arifaj, Vladimir Pjetergjokaj, Shkelqim Fusha							
EXTENSION OF THE M2 MAIN ROAD: SECTION KM 1+ 600 TO KM 5+ 200 AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION AT LAPLALELO	12/8/2007	Lot 1	INTEGRAL Sh.p.k.	2156075.16	Pristina	Jeton Aliu, Agim Aliu	11/6/2006	5
			EUROKOS		Caglavica Pristina	Yiber Shamolli	22/01/2008	36
			TALI		Gnjilane	Florim Zuka	30/6/2004	6

from Road Bonanza

am a close friend of minister Limaj but this does not mean that my company has an advantage on tenders," he told Prishtina Insight.

Morina went on to note that he had demolished two of his petrol stations, in Vragoli and Komoran, at a cost of around 200,000 euro, on the orders of the ministry, because they were building a road through the area. "I should ask a lot from the minister for that," he joked.

Inexperience not a problem:

Prishtina Insight can also reveal that companies that have little experience, few staff, and which appear to have registered as companies only after winning contracts, have won sizable tenders.

One is the Prishtina-based firm Damastion Project, which, according to Kosovo's official business records, was created in November 2008 with just two staff.

Damastion won its first contract worth 3 million euro with the Ministry of Transport in October 2008, according to the procurement agency's archive, before the firm was even registered.

It worked alongside two other companies for this first bid. In December 2009, it won a 4.6 million

project by itself to build a road in the Podujevo region in northwest Kosovo.

When Prishtina Insight contacted Damastion, owner Visar Tahiri said the official records were inaccurate as the company was created in 2004. He said the registration date was changed to November 2008 when the company modified its entry in the business registry.

Kosovo's business register failed to respond to a specific request about whether they had made a mistake with the registration date but chief executive Mehdi Pllashniku told Prishtina Insight that in general they would not change a firm's "constitution date" if a company later made changes to the official record.

Tahiri accepted that the firm had only two staff when it registered but said it had expanded since then to 15. But he also said his company was more professional than many older firms and had complied with all the requirements for a bid. This sometimes meant Damastion Project had submitted 6,000 pages of documentation to win a tender.

Endrit Shala said companies had to meet certain requirements to win tenders, such as having participated in road construction projects up to a

certain value and having experienced staff. He said one problem in Kosovo was that few firms had much experience in the field. "Most haven't built in Kosovo for the last 20 years. These are the companies we have in Kosovo," he said. He also said that due to the small size and inexperience of most firms, most road tenders were awarded to consortiums.

The owner of one of Kosovo's most successful and largest road building firms, who asked not to be named for fear that the ministry would "take revenge", said the use of inexperienced firms that were willing to pay bribes to get tenders had led to a fall in quality.

"We cannot win tenders because we don't give money to the government," this businessman claimed. "They come to me and ask for money, but if I give in, the price of the work would be higher," he explained.

"Other companies do so [pay bribes] and then miss out on laying several centimeters of gravel and asphalt, which is why the quality of their asphalt is poor."

This man said he had pulled out of work on the main road between Prishtina and Skopje because of the poor quality of the gravel used

there. He said the quality was so bad that his asphalt-laying machines began sinking into the road.

Almost 7 million euro has been spent on this section of road, between Prishtina and Lipjan, one of the few dual carriageways in Kosovo. Parts of this route are already cracked and potholed.

However, Endrit Shala maintained the road had been built to a high standard. He said the ministry experts had advised delaying the laying of a third layer of asphalt until this year because of poor weather conditions.

Quality as important as quantity:

Myzejene Selmani, chair of the Kosovo parliament's committee for economy, trade, industry, electricity, transport and telecommunication, and a deputy for the opposition New Kosovo Alliance, said corruption in road tenders was a major concern.

"Considering that the Ministry of Transport has a budget which is three times higher than [any] other ministries and has directed almost all its budget towards road infrastructure, it is shame to have such poor quality roads in Kosovo," she

said.

"I drive on these roads and there are a lot of holes," she added. "The government inaugurates and cuts a lot of red ribbons, but it's just for marketing. Tenders are not being given out appropriately, not following the law... Companies that win the tenders are not qualified."

Selmani claimed that six months after many new roads were finished, the Ministry was having to spend the same money all over again on repairs. "The companies constructing roads have no clue how to build a road, they just have connections to the Ministry of Transport," she asserted. She also highlighted the poor quality of the Prishtina to Skopje road.

Another development causing concern in the past two years has been the arrival of Albanian firms on the Kosovo road-building market. Local road firms complain that Albanian firms are manipulating the tendering process.

The manager of the major road-building company mentioned earlier said Albanian companies were winning tenders in Kosovo "because manipulation [of tenders] can be done easily... On the other hand, Kosovo companies cannot work in Albania - I was there as a sub-contractor but left Albania because we were threatened."

Endrit Shala accepted that there was a need to improve the quality of new roads but said the ministry had made great strides in improving monitoring of road-building. "There is lots of room for improvement but the quality of roads is much better now than it was up to 2007/8," he said. He added that the government had brought back in-house inspections of roads and employed 20 to 30 experts working on the issue.

In 2008, a Spanish company obtained the job of verifying road quality and materials used and Shala said that all roads were now being put through laboratory tests.

He said the ministry had also brought in contracts that placed the burden of repairs for up to two years on the builders of the roads and to ensure this happened, the ministry retained 10 per cent of value of the contract until the guarantee period had elapsed.

Safet Gerxhalii, deputy head of Kosovo's Chamber of Commerce, said everyone wanted better roads and investment in key infrastructure, such as the planned Merdare-Vermice highway running to the Albanian border, could turn Kosovo into a transit country for international goods.

But quantity was no substitute for quality. "It's not enough just to invest, we need to have good quality and the quality is not so good," he said. "If after one year we need to revisit the same road, then we're damaging the economy of Kosovo."

Names and addresses on the list of winning firms appear as they do on public documents, whether they are Albanian or Serbian spelling.

If you have a comment on the quality of any of these roads, the costs and the firms or directors who won the contacts, please email:
info@prishtinainsight.com

For the full list of major tenders visit www.balkaninsight.com

Road Name	Tender award Date	Lot	Name of contractor	Value of contract	Address	Directors/Staff	Constitution Date	Workforce
SECTION KM 1+ 600 TO KM 5+ 200 AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION AT LAPLASELO	12/8/2007	Lot 1	EUROKOS	2156075.16	Caglavica Pristina	Ylber Shamolli	22/01/2008	36
			TALI		Gnjilane	Florim Zuka	30/6/2004	6
EXTENSION OF THE ROAD M2 (PRISTINA - MITROVICA) SECTION, PRISTINA - SHKABAJ, LOT 1 AND LOT 2 (FROM KM 0+000 TO KM 3+123)	22/7/2008	Lot 1	DRINI COMPANY	4150156.88	Prizren	Agron A. Kastrati Avdi Xh. Kastrati Milaim Gashi Shafi Gashi	10/4/2007	120
			ALB BUILDING RSM		Albania	Odhise Bresha, Pellumb Beta	NA	NA
		Lot 2	ESKAVATORI BENI COM	4266234.95	Uroševac	Isa Rysha, Varos Selo	10/9/2006	40
					Pristina	Ismet Kunushevci	3/9/2009	30
EXTENSION OF THE ROAD M2, SECTION CAGLLAVICA - M2/M25 (QMI) KM 1+600 TO KM 5+200 SECOND PHASE, LOT I; KM 5+200 TO KM 8+ 000 - SECOND PHASE, LOT II	20/6/2008	Lot 1	EUROKOS	2799411.08	Caglavica Pristina	Ylber Shamolli	22/1/2008	36
			TALI		Gnjilane	Florim Zuka	30/6/2004	6
			INTEGRAL		Pristina	Jeton Aliu Agim Aliu	22/1/2008	36
		Lot 2	ALKO IMPEX	1839437.09	Pristina	Imer Ademi, Fatime Ademi	9/2/2004	25
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD QAFË E DUHLËS - LUZHNICË - JAVURË - GRANDINË, L=9706.83m	3/10/2009		EUROFAMIS	3198356.02	Suva Reka	Fatmir Bytyçi Muhamet Bytyçi Besnik Bytyçi Burim Bytyçi	1/8/2008	40
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD VOJTESH (R110) - LUBOVEC - GALICË (R105)	2/11/2009		R & RUKOLLI	2288799.37	Skënderaj	Rrustem Rukolli	28/02/2006	6
RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD GORANCË - HANI I ELEZIT	2/11/2009		ARBOTEC	2346816.86	Prizren	Hektor Begiri,	20/08/2008	3
			CONENG		Prishtinë	Skender Vata	3/10/2005	10
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD REQAN - LLUKVÇË - STRUZHË	19/10/2009		GETOARI	2416111.91	Prizren	Naim Besimi Omer Besimi	17/10/2006	70
ASPHALTING OF THE LOCAL ROAD STREZOVÇ - KRILEVË	19/10/2009		VICTORIA INVEST INTERNATIONAL	2016541.66	Suharekë	Fatmir Kuçi	4/5/2005	16
CONSTRUCTION OF ROUNDABOUT OBI LIQ	30/9/2009		BENI COM	2745984.22	Prishtinë	Ismet Kunushevci	3/9/2009	30
RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD FERIZAJ - GREME - BAINCË L=9.699m	4/8/2009		ESKAVATORI COMPANY	2604871.07	Ferizaj	Isa Rysha, Varos Selo	10/9/2006	40
CONSTRUCTION OF THE REGIONAL ROAD R209 BRESALC-KISHNAPOLE-GADIME-VRELLE L=17.17 Km	4/8/2009		BEJTA COMERCE	4824214.73	Gjilan	Basri Kçiku Adem Kçiku	3/5/2008	85
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD DRENAS - GRABOVÇ, DRENAS - GURI I PLAKËS	22/10/2008	Lot 1:	DAMASTION PROJECT	2997196.61	Prishtina	Visar Tahiri	11/27/2008	2
			N.N. SHKËMBI		Drenas	Bedri Rexha	2/20/2002	8
			ESKAVATORI STANDARD		Ferizaj	Isa Rysha, Varos Selo	9/10/2006	45
		Lot 2:	CONENG	3,360,445.45	Prishtinë	Nebih Zariqi	27/2/2009	100
			Prishtinë	Skender Vata	3/10/2005	10		
CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD R (105) PALAC-VUSHTRRI, I SECTION FROM KM 0+000 TO 8+583,06 AND II -SECTION FROM 8+583,06 KM TO 17+588.60	26/5/2008	Lot 1:	BEJTA COMMERCE	1677786.23	Gjilan	Basri Kçiku Adem Kçiku	3/5/2008	85
			EUROKOS		Caglavica Pristina	Ylber Shamolli	22/1/2008	36
		Lot 2:	Drenica	3199395.35	Ferizaj	Ismet Shamolli	29/2/2008	25
			INTEGRAL	Prishtinë	Jeton Aliu Agim Aliu	22/1/2008	36	
GOFIL-KRASALIQ-KRAMIROVÇ-QIREZ	26/10/2009		TONI COM	2378888.32	Pristina	Ardian Berila	NA	NA
CONSTRUCTION OF THE LOCAL ROAD PODUJEVË-HERTICË-TURUQICË-GALAP, SECTION PODUJEVË-HERTICË	21/12/2009		DAMASTION PROJECT	4652012.99	Prishtinë	Visar Tahiri	27/11/2008	2
ARLLAT MALISHEVE RAHOVEÇ XERXE	9/2008		JEHONA	4449218.85	Malisheve	Hazir Krasniqi	10/08/2004	3
			PATRONI			Habib Morina	14/4/2008	6
			TIMI KRSKO			Agim Krasniqi Osman Krasniqi Sami Krasniqi	N/A	NA

Police and Central Bank Chief 'Next' in Reshuffle



By Petrit Collaku and
Lawrence Marzouk

Kosovo's police chief Sheremet Ahmeti has been the latest victim of the government's spring cleaning and the head of Kosovo's Central Bank could follow, it has been claimed.

The government confirmed yesterday that Ahmeti would be replaced by his deputy Behar Selimi, but did not provide any explanation for the decision.

And sources speaking to Prishtina dailies on Wednesday claimed that the Governor of the Central Bank of Kosovo, Hashim Rexhepi, would be next in the 'reformatisation process', which has already resulted in six ministers being replaced last week.

On Tuesday last week, the government confirmed that among the Democratic League of Kosovo members, Haki Demolli would replace Nekibe Kelmendi as justice minister; that Bujar Bukoshi was replacing Alush Gashi as health minister; and that Lutfi Haziri was the new minister of culture, taking over from Valton Beqiri.

For the Democratic Party of Kosovo, former prime minister of Kosovo Bajram Rexhepi took on the job as Minister of Internal Affairs, in place of Zenun Pajaziti; deputy Edita Tahiri became the new minister of Public Administration, instead of Arsim Bajrami; Besim Beqaj, head of the Chamber of Commerce, became the new Minister for European

Integration; and Blerand Stavileci replaced Idriz Vehapi as Minister of Agriculture.

The outgoing justice minister, Nekibe Kelmendi, told Prishtina Insight that she had refused to resign from the post but accepted the decision. "There are no reasons provided to me," Kelmendi said. "There was no reason given by the LDK leadership for the work I did. I don't have anything to hide," Kelmendi said.

Melihate Termkolli, who recently resigned from the LDK leadership, said that such changes are not realistic. "The changes are just smoke and mirrors. In principle, changes are not happening there where corruption is," Termkolli said.

Rumours that the Central Bank of Kosovo head, Hashim Rexhepi, will also soon be replaced have not been confirmed by the officials.

Government spokesman Memli Krasniqi and Bujar Abdullahu, spokesman for the Central Bank, told Express that they were unaware of the decision.

Reasons for the replacement of Kosovo Police chief Ahmeti remain unclear, and a statement issued by Prime Minister Thaci on Tuesday did not help to clear up the situation.

The statement suggested that Ahmeti had requested to be released from the position and thanked him for his work, although sources suggest that he was sacked.



The government finally began its 'reformatisation' last week

Guard Injured in Explosion at Disputed Building



By Petrit Collaku

One person was injured in an explosion on Monday night in the town of Viti while guarding a disputed building located inside a schoolyard. Kosovo police have reported that the building caught fire due to the explosion.

The targeted building has been the subject of a property dispute between the education directorate of the municipality of Viti and the hunting association for some time.

At the time of the attack, the building was being used by the education directorate.

The EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, decided recently that the building belonged to the hunting association "Drenusha", a decision that was not respected by the municipality. Recently, a protest was organised by the Viti municipality against the EULEX decision.

EULEX condemned the explosion and stated that it trusted that the Kosovo police would investigate the case and bring the perpetrators to justice as soon as possible.

"EULEX will monitor the investigation closely. Such actions are a

direct attack on the rule of law and have no place in any modern and civilized society," the EULEX press release reads.

The Viti municipality has also condemned the attack, saying that it was against the school, the education process and against the municipality itself.

According to the municipality the educational archive has been destroyed in the explosion and subsequent fire. It called for a shift investigation and the people behind it to be brought to justice.

According to the statements of the security guards in the building, armed and masked people carried out the attack.



The disputed building in Viti was gutted by the explosion and the subsequent fire

Komplot



By Lawrence Marzouk

Sigmund Freud is believed to have said: "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

Had he visited Kosovo, of course, he would have realised that nothing is ever what it seems.

Whenever some uncomfortable nugget of news makes its way into the press at an inappropriate time, unnamed, and sometimes named, forces are blamed for attempting to destabilise Kosovo.

With all the recent talk of agents, double agents and dark arts, I had been feeling a little bit left out.

So I am pleased to report that as of last week I have my own cigar, which isn't a cigar.

The table you see on pages 2 and 3 - yes, the one listing all the road tenders - is in fact the work of an intelligence service.

The news was a surprise to me, as I and my colleagues believed we had spent months studiously compiling the information on all the major road tenders issued in the past three years.

But, according to the Ministry of Transport, Prishtina Insight in fact received it nicely packaged up from an undisclosed secret unit as part of a wider campaign to damage the ministry and the minister.

(A ministry would never invent such an outlandish accusation without compelling facts and incontrovertible evidence, so I believe them.)

I am a touch curious about what trickery was used to slip the document into my "sent items" folder, and how the agents managed to reformat my memory to make me believe that I entered large chunks of information by hand, often late at night, and that I had been doing so in order to better inform the public.

It was also a surprise to discover that a document composed solely of information published by Kosovo's institutions, and available to anyone at a click of the button, would be part of a disinformation campaign.

But still, who I am to question? I'm just the unwitting mouthpiece for a wider conspiracy of which I have no knowledge.

So, you see, Sigmund, you were wrong. In Kosovo, a cigar is never just a cigar, and a meticulously compiled dossier of road tenders is never just a meticulously compiled dossier of road tenders.

I'm off to celebrate the culmination of months of detailed investigative journalism, I mean, my new conspiracy theory, or komplot, with a cigar. Can you smoke a conspiracy theory?

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Highway Deal Signed Without Price Tag

The Ministry of Transport has signed a deal with the consortium Bechtel-Enka to build the Vermicë-Merdare for 700million euro, but admits the final costs have not been decided.



By Besiana Xharra

Construction of the Vermicë-Merdare highway will start in May, without a final route and a definitive price tag.

Kosovo government signed a 700million euro contract in late March with the American-Turkish consortium Bechtel-Enka for the construction and of the new road, which is expected to be 117 kilometers long and will connect the south-west border with Albanian to the north-east border with Serbia.

But, according to the Ministry of Transport, Bechtel-Enka have only been given the go-ahead to build the first two sections of the road, between Vermicë and Qafa e Dulës, during which time the rest of the project will be prepared.

Austrian firm Strabag was the only other firm to make the final cut, but its offer of 1.3 billion was well above Bechtel-Enka's.

The section after Qafa e Dulës is likely to be the toughest and most expensive part of the new road, involving several tunnels, and the ministry has considered diverting the planned road through Malishevo.

So despite the 700 million euro deal, the Minister of Transport Fatmir Limaj admits costs could change when the final route is selected.

"We will hire an independent company that will make geological surveys, geo-mechanic surveys and then will issue the final cost of this [difficult] segment, which will be done during the time that the



Bechtel-Enka workers on the Albanian highway, connecting the port of Durres with the Kosovo border

highway is built up to Qafa e Dulës," Limaj said.

"We cannot know which direction is more beneficial for us, as we do not have the project for the tunnels," the minister added.

Limaj, however, said the cost per kilometer would be around 7.5million euro.

Although Bechtel-Enka has won the tender for the whole project, Limaj explains, under the terms of the contract the firm will be assessed after each segment, at which point the government can break the contract.

The first two segments will be funded from Kosovo's budget at a cost of 120 million euro.

"We will go segment by segment and our first priority is to build the highway from Vermicë to Qafa e Dulës. The other segments will be decided by the government if they have money to continue," said Limaj, who added that the

Ministry of Economy and Finance has been tasked with finding the funding.

Minister of economy Ahmet Shala said the government may take out a loan, but added that support may also come from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

"We will try to complete the project through international financing and as for the loan, it is still early to talk about it," said Shala.

Opposition politicians and some experts have criticised this 'piece-meal' approach to Kosovo's largest ever capital investment.

Myzajene Selmani, chairwoman of the commission for transport at the Kosovo Assembly, said she feared that the 700 million cost could double.

She said the omission of the most difficult section was worrying for the potential costs, adding

that in Albania, where Bechtel-Enka have built the other side of the highway, the 600 million euro project ended up costing 1.2 billion euro.

Haki Shatri, former minister of economy and deputy for the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, accused the Ministry of Transport of launching the project without a plan to finish it.

"Such a big project cannot be launched without the full project [in place]. Also, the method of construction segment by segment makes me suspicious," said Shatri.

Confronting these accusations, Limaj has said that the project is not in his hands, as it is the parliament which will approve it.

"The decision to build the first two segments will be approved by the parliament and even future changes will be decided parliament," said Limaj.

The Ministry of Transport told

Prishtina Insight that the beginning of May will mark the start of 36 months of construction programme. The project will need 6,000 workers, 4,000 of which will be local.

Ministry spokesman Bexhet Pozhari said that the construction of the highway will help Kosovo's trade, especially with Albania, and attract international businesses.

"Also, there will be other effects, such as on agricultural development, tourism, and the use of the port of Durres and so on," said Pozhari.

He said that it was for these reasons that Kosovo's government decided to build the highway to Albania and not toward Skopje, which would be significantly cheaper.

He said that plans for a Skopje highway will be ready in 2011.

Competing Companies: The tender for construction of the Merdare-Vërmicë highway was launched in September 2009. Some 33 companies expressed an interest in the project.

International consultancy company Eversheds selected a short-list of seven companies: Alpine, Porr and Strabag from Austria, Bechtel-Enka, Makyol from Turkey, Pizzaroti from Italy, and Terna from Greece.

Of these seven companies, the ministry selected two for the final cut: Bechtel-Enka and Strabag.

The special committee, set up to deal with the tender, concluded that Bechtel-Enka offered the more favourable offer at 700million euro compared to Strabag's 1.3billion euro.

Negotiations between Bechtel-Enka and the government started and on March 26 the deal was signed.

Kosovo Stability at Risk with Rising Unemployment

As the number of job seekers in the country continues to grow, economic experts and international organisations fear that high unemployment could lead to instability



By Lavdim Hamidi

Every day for more than one week, Musa Gashi has been waiting near Bill Clinton Boulevard, Prishtina, for someone to offer him a job.

Near him are ten other manual labourers, hoping to find a job at this street-side job centre.

"We have been waiting for one week for someone who needs manual workers, but until now no one has offered anything," he told Prishtina Insight, adding that in the recent months he has rarely been offered more than 15 euro a day for physical labour.

Official statistics reveal that unemployment levels in Kosovo are on the increase from an already sky high rate of 48 per cent, raising concerns that anger

could spill over onto the streets.

The first quarter of this year has already been marked by a series of public sector strikes.

According to the Statistical Office of Kosovo (ESK) the number of job seekers registered in the last quarter of 2009 increased by 0.1% compared to the third quarter of the year.

The report also reveals that more than 93 per cent of registered jobseekers have been jobless for more than a year.

The rate of unemployment in Kosovo according to official statistics is around 48 per cent, while in Eurozone countries the figure is around 10 per cent.

Kosovo also compares badly to the region with Macedonia registering an unemployment rate of 30 per cent, and Serbia and Bosnia Hercegovina at 20 per cent.

Last month, UNDP warned that unemployment and poverty are

the main factors that risk stability in Kosovo.

According to their early warning report, 62 per cent of people surveyed said that unemployment and poverty were the main factors threatening stability.

One economy expert said that the number of young people entering the employment market coupled with the low number of jobs being created were the major cause for concern.

"Over 30,000 young people enter the labour market in Kosovo each year, while there are no more than 4,000 to 5,000 new job openings, so each year around 25,000 young Kosovars are added to the unemployment list," said Agim Shahini, head of the Kosovo Business Alliance.

He said that the high level of unemployment represents a permanent risk for social unrest in the country.



State employees protested earlier this year. Experts fear the jobless may follow suit.

Shahini added that the government should draft economic policies which are more favourable to businesses in order to attract foreign investors to the country to generate new job.

Alban Zogaj, senior researcher at the Riinvest Institute, which specialises in economic policy, said that three important pillars of the economy have been on the wane in the past year: exports, foreign and domestic investments and remittances.

He said that these three problems have undoubtedly led to a decrease in the number of new

positions and increased unemployment.

According to the Central Bank of Kosovo, exports decreased by 20 per cent, direct foreign investments by 18 per cent and remittances by 6 per cent in 2009, compared to the previous year.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare had promised that a considerable number of Kosovars would be assured temporary jobs in different EU countries during 2009. But the ministry has admitted that this programme also failed as the financial crisis had affected the whole Eurozone.

Germia Park's 1.3 million euro White Elephant

Five years after work started on new government offices in Prishtina's much loved Germia Park, the building remains unfinished. "There are so many legal violations, we don't know what to do," admits Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi.



By Petrit Collaku

The future of the half-finished Administrative and Protocol Centre in Germia Park remains uncertain, despite the allocation of three million euro to complete the structure, Prishtina Insight has learnt.

Works started and stopped on the building in 2005, due to protests from the Germia 2005, a coalition of seven NGOs, who were supported by members of then opposition members of parliament.

The group uncovered a series of administrative and legal violations in the decision to build the new offices and filed a complaint to Prishtina Municipal Court.

Since then, the case has not advanced as the court claimed to be unable to contact the coalition because it did not have its address.

And a parliamentary commission created to resolve the dispute has failed to do so, despite three million euro being allocated to complete the building, which is planned to offer assembly members and foreign delegations a pleasant place to hold conferences and meetings.



The unfinished building in Germia Park

Kushtrim Kaloshi, from the NGO Advocacy Training and Resource Center, ATRC, complained that members of the government, who had opposed the building while in opposition, had now approved the restart of work.

"We have a file of 21 facts of legal and administrative procedure violations. I don't understand why the Kosovo Assembly has proposed for work to continue," Kaloshi told Prishtina Insight.

Kaloshi said that the Kosovo Assembly has allocated three million euro to finish the job, which will be spent over the next three years.

He added that the coalition met Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi and provided him with the dossier of evidence of viola-

tions by the Kosovo Assembly and Prishtina Municipality.

"Krasniqi was aware of the situation and we told him that this parliament cannot make the same mistake as the previous government," Kaloshi said.

He added that Kosovo Assembly, run in 2005 by Nexhat Daci, decided to build the centre on land which it did not own and the transfer of the plot to the Kosovo Assembly was illegal, as it was not signed off by the UNMIK representative in Prishtina Municipality.

Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi admitted that it is still unclear what will happen with the building.

"There is confusion and nothing is defined," Krasniqi told Prishtina Insight.

He added that the matter would

be discussed by Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and Kosovo's President Fatmir Sejdiu.

"We are thinking that this centre should not only be for the Kosovo Assembly but for all Kosovo institutions," he said.

Krasniqi said that he is aware of the many violations but it was the majority of the commission who had voted in favour of work restarting.

"We have inherited this problem and it is true that there are so many legal violations, we don't know what to do," Krasniqi said.

He added: "We all know how the courts, how the justice system, works in Kosovo, therefore the problem still remains unsolved," Krasniqi said.

"One thing you should know: we are a state and the state needs space in order to function well." He said that he wasn't against other uses for the building, such as a recreational centre for children.

Prishtina Municipal Court confirmed it had received the case in August 2005 but said it had not been progressed.

"The reason for not solving the case is the lack of a mail address of the claimant," Nuhu Uka, president of Prishtina Municipal Court, told Prishtina Insight. Prishtina Insight has now provided the details to the court.

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Martin Quack

Forum Civil Peace Service



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

Many things are surprising for a Gastarbeiter like me, for instance the political ignorance towards public transportation. It seems there is not even a local bus connection to the central bus station.

What's your favorite hang-out?

Vila Germia - since the hills offer nice walks and the restaurant has a non-smoking room.

Do you do anything cultural?

I sing in a choir and sometimes I go to concerts and theatre plays

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Cars, especially the big ones, both on the roads and on footways, completely disrespecting pedestrians and cyclists.

If you were mayor of Prishtina for the day what would you change?

Balancing the city's budget, creating some jobs, and making Prishtina more livable: by collecting parking fees.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

Three or four, at home and at work, more if I am in the city.

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

There is lots of tasty traditional food, for example specia me maze or pite.

What landmark do you use to tell taxi drivers where you live?

In Velani, close to Dr Ivanka.

Serb Cemetery Attacked

Two Serb cemeteries in Kosovo have been desecrated since February, drawing strong condemnations from the government and international institutions



By Lawrence Marzouk

A Serb graveyard has been vandalised in a village near Prishtina, Kosovo.

The desecration of the cemetery in the village of Rubofc/Rabovce near Lipjan/Lipljan emerged last Wednesday, and Kosovo Police confirmed that they were investigating.

Several tombstones and crosses were damaged in the attack.

Fletcher Burton, deputy head of the International Civilian Office, and Kosovo's government have condemned 'this act of vandalism'.

Mr Burton said: "Bringing the perpetrators to justice can support existing positive interethnic relations in the village, and underline that Kosovo is making all efforts to become a homeland for all its citizens."

"We align ourselves with the condemnation issued by the



Prime Minister Hashim Thaci at the desecrated cemetery in Gjilan/Gnjilane

Government of Kosovo and join their call for a thorough investigation of the incident."

In a statement, the government said: "The Government of Kosovo strongly condemns this act of vandalism, which aims at damaging the cooperation and coexistence of communities in Kosovo."

"This act has angered all the

citizens of Kosovo and is condemned by all Kosovo institutions."

In February, a Serb cemetery in Gjilan/Gnjilane was also vandalised.

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci visited the desecrated grave of the Serb woman and called, alongside Pieter Feith, head of the

International Civilian Office, for a speedy investigation.

"This act has shocked all the citizens of Kosovo and all the institutions in Kosovo consider it to be reprehensible," Thaci said.

The perpetrators of this attack and the one at Rubofc/Rabovce have not yet been found.

Student's Headscarf Divides Kosovo Society

While international attention focuses on the headscarf issue in France and Belgium, Kosovo is also wrestling with the question of whether overt signs of faith have a place in schools and colleges.



By Belinda Vrapi

Arjeta Halimi, a 16-year-old Muslim girl from Viti, in Kosovo, arrived for another day at school on January 15, 2009, to be told by security guards that she could not enter with her headscarf. She refused to take it off and has not been able to return to her studies.

Her case has been going back and forth between the courts, the Ministry of Education, and the Municipality of Viti and her school, Kuvendi I Lezhes, but no solution has been found. Arjeta is not alone. Another ten young women have been barred from school since 2004 for refusing to remove their headscarves. One was in Prishtina, and three in Skenderaj.

Arjeta told Prishtina Insight that she had been attending religious classes at the local mosque for five years before she decided to don the headscarf. "My mother wears it but not my sisters. They are different," she said.

Under instructions from the school principal, the security guard had told her to remove the headscarf. The issue then went to the education department at the municipality of Viti, which supported the decision that religious symbols were not allowed in

schools.

The family has sought help from CLARD, an NGO based in Prishtina, which provided legal assistance and which brought the issue to court. The court in Gjilan found in favour of Arjeta's right to wear the headscarf in November 2009 and ordered the municipality to allow her to resume classes. But despite this decision, the municipality and the school have refused to modify their position, and Arjeta remains at home.

Hope that Kosovo's Supreme Court might clarify the issue was dashed when it declared that it did not consider a ruling on this issue came within its remit.

The ban on headscarves in schools is applied unequally across Kosovo, as several neighbouring municipalities, such as Gjilan, Ferizaj, and Kacanik, impose no such order. Arjeta has been told that she will be allowed to take her final exams wearing the veil, however, and is dedicating her time to studying for them, as she hopes to attend university.

Asked about how she is spending time out of school, she said that she begins her day helping her mother with housework, attends a religious class from 1pm to 4pm and then spends the afternoon studying or meeting her friends, who are being very supportive. "They call me every so often and check on how I am doing and tell me that I am not alone and

they will fight for me," Arjeta said.

Both classmates and other pupils at the school have called on the school principal to allow Arjeta to return to class. "Why do they let them [other pupils] wear crosses and not allow me to wear the headscarf?" Arjeta asked.

Article 8 of the country's constitution, describes Kosovo as "a secular state... neutral in matters of religious beliefs", but also protects citizens' rights based on international agreements such as the European Convention for the Protection of Human and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The constitution says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

The Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Kosovo meanwhile states that "no child shall be denied the right to education" but makes no reference to religion.

Perceived contradictions between the constitution and the law, and lack of guidance, have created space for different schools in different municipalities to interpret the rules as they wish.

CLARD, the organisation that has been providing legal assistance to Arjeta's family, told Prishtina Insight that the education ministry had left the issue in the hands of the municipality of Viti, which is not sympathetic to her case. According to Fehri Qerimi, education director at Viti, "It's a secular state, with secular schools.

"We follow the Constitution and the school regulations and she should abide by that. We haven't refused her right to education, as she is allowed to take exams". The director of the school declined to comment on the issue.

According to research by Nora Huseinovic, a student of law at the Islamic University of Malaysia, the headscarf is a religious obligation, not a symbol. She believes that not allowing young students to observe their religion violates freedom of religion.

"The situation in Kosovo and the approach taken by the government and Ministry of Education is more or less a reflection of what is happening in the surrounding countries," she said. "The objection to Muslims students wearing the Islamic headscarf is purely for political reasons."

Kosovo was trying to portray itself as a secular society to appeal to the international community, which is wary of Muslim states, she added.

"Female Muslim students in Kosovo have the right to demon-

strate their religion by wearing the Islamic headscarf, as this is their religious obligation, and as such it's a basic human right guaranteed by all international human rights instruments and similarly protected under the constitution," she continued.

"As Kosovo is a Muslim-majority country, the government and the Ministry of Education should not overlook this issue but give it due attention and clarify the legal position regarding the Islamic headscarf in public schools.

"The current provision of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education is vague, giving space to so-called 'secularist' directors and teachers to interfere with and violate the right of students to wear it, depriving them of another even more important right to education."

CLARD said it believed that schools were breaching students' rights concerning "freedom of religious beliefs and right to education" and were guilty of "discrimination on religious grounds".

In a report, CLARD added that: "The court's decision in favour of Arjeta should be considered an important step in the battle against discriminating practices in the Republic of Kosovo.

"This is an urgent case in the consolidation of the rule of law in the Republic of Kosovo and in removing discriminating practices."

The World Headscarf Debate

Turkey and Tunisia are the only Muslim countries where the law prohibits the wearing of the hijab, or headscarf, in government buildings, schools, and universities.

The headscarf was banned by in Turkey in 1928, under the reforming influence of Ataturk. The Turkish government recently attempted to lift a ban on Muslim headscarves at universities, but this was overturned by the country's Constitutional Court.

In Tunisia, women were banned from wearing the veil in state offices in 1981.

On March 15, 2004, France passed a law banning "symbols or clothes through which students conspicuously display their religious affiliation" in public primary schools, middle schools, and secondary schools.

France is considering an outright ban in all public buildings and public transport.

In the Belgian city of Maaseik, Niqab, which also covers the face, has been banned.



Australian Surgeon Lifts Lid on



By Shengjyl Osmani

Craig Jurisevic's memoir will shock many with its portrait of disorder and corruption – as well as heroism – behind the Kosovo war frontlines in 1999.

Craig Jurisevic's extraordinary journey from an Adelaide hospital to the frontline of the Kosovo Liberation Army is the stuff of a Hollywood blockbuster. So it no surprise that Academy award-winning producer Eva Orner, has agreed to translate his remarkable tale to the big screen.

Jurisevic's book, due for release on May 1, according to the cardiothoracic and trauma surgeon, will be uncomfortable reading for some former senior commanders of the KLA who are now leading politicians and businessmen.

He told Prishtina Insight: "My book describes the heroism of the men and women who, unlike most of their commanders, stayed at the front despite horrific conditions and insurmountable odds."

"It is a frank and honest description of the war as it really was, and not as the propagandists would have many believe."

"I have strong support from the men of the Atlantic Battalion and the German and Swiss battalions with whom I served on [Mount] Pastrik and they have verified crucial aspects of the book," he continued.

"Some of the commanders who left their troops on the mountain to drink coffee in Krume are now influential ministers in the Kosovan government and business community, and this book may well be an affront to them."

"The people of Kosova and the world need to know what really happened and this book does just that. It is a testament to the will and strength of the Kosovar Albanians during this terrible war and it will stand as an accurate,



unbiased account of that period."

Kosovo was not Craig's first experience of conflict.

He worked in Israel in the early 1990s

before landing on the Albanian border with Kosovo in 1999 as the struggle escalated between the KLA and Serbian forces and as NATO launched its bombing campaign.

Since the end of the conflict he has worked with the Australian army in East Timor and in Afghanistan, and has now returned to normal life as a surgeon and lecturer back in Adelaide.

He came to Kosovo early in 1999 after being shocked by the images of war on television, leaving his wife Donna and five-year-old son Jackson at home and volunteering with the International Medical Corps.

Soon he was treating sick and injured Kosovar refugees as they

streamed across the border to Kukes, in northern Albania, a town close to the border into which at one point tens of thousands of refugees were arriving daily.

But while tending the injured, he began to notice that something was wrong. Despite the humanitarian disaster unfolding around him, suspiciously few patients were making it to the hospital.

Although the hospital was brimming with brand-new medical supplies, few injured people were benefiting. Jurisevic found

out that the sick were being asked to pay for treatment.

Desperate to publicise the problem, he met the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. He then leaked the story to a US journalist, after which the racketeers quickly pointed the finger of blame in his direction and he was urged to leave Kukes without delay.

"I exposed corruption in the Kukes hospital where injured refugees were being turned away or left to die if they did not pay the hospital director for treat-

News in Brief

US Deputy Secretary of State Arrives in Kosovo



The US Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg will arrive in Kosovo today as part of a tour of the Balkans.

According to a US State Department press briefing on Monday, he will visit Prishtina to 'reaffirm the US's commitment to Kosovo's sovereignty and territorial integrity'.

He has already visited Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and arrived in Serbia on Wednesday to renew the US's 'commitment to work with the Serbian Government to foster stability in the region and encourage practical cooperation with Kosovo'.

Members of civil society have called on Steinberg to ensure that EULEX has enough capacities to fulfil its mandate.

Another Round of Elections Sunday



The municipality of Istog will hold another round of local elections this Sunday following the death of its mayor, Fadil Ferati.

Ferati, who was a vice-president of the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, was re-elected to the post in the second round run-off of November's elections, but passed away in January this year.

Journalist Stands By Radical Islam Claims

The author of a disputed article about radical Islam, published in The Sunday Times of London, has defended his work against claims he quoted the head of the Macedonian Islamic Community, Sulejman Rexhepi, without speaking to him.

Bojan Pancevski, the author of the text about radical Islam in the Balkans, said that he has the recordings of his conversations with three officials from the Macedonian Islamic Community, IVZ, including Sulejman Rexhepi.

Rexhepi's office has claimed that the leader did not speak with the journalist and did not make any claims about the control of Skopje mosques by radical Islamists.

"They all confirmed to me that

four mosques were not under the IVZ control. I got the impression that they wanted this to be known in public," Pancevski told Prishtina Insight.

Pancevski said that he suspects that the IVZ misunderstood the original content of his text as some parts of it might have been misinterpreted in the local media in Macedonia.

Earlier this week, Rexhepi's office issued a press release denying that Rexhepi had said this to the British newspaper or that he had ever spoken with the journalist.

"Rexhepi never met or talked to the journalist of the British newspaper," his office told media in the press release.

Dark Side of Kosovo Conflict

ment," Jurisevic said. "The story was printed in the Stars and Stripes [US military newspaper] and NATO investigated the corruption."

Shortly after leaving Kukes, Craig was introduced to Hosnje Hoxha, a KLA commander who asked him to join the surgical team operating on casualties in a camp closer to the frontline.

His experience at the KLA base at Helshan and on the frontline from late May to June 9 was disillusioning.

The KLA, he found out, mainly comprised young inexperienced recruits from all over the world who barely knew how to hold a rifle, let alone fight a vicious guerilla war. It was obvious that they were not trained to face the battle-hardened Serbs in the regular and paramilitary forces.

Well-equipped surgical facilities at the medical camp lay idle as it was too far from the fighting, and the doctors were not prepared to travel to where the action was tak-

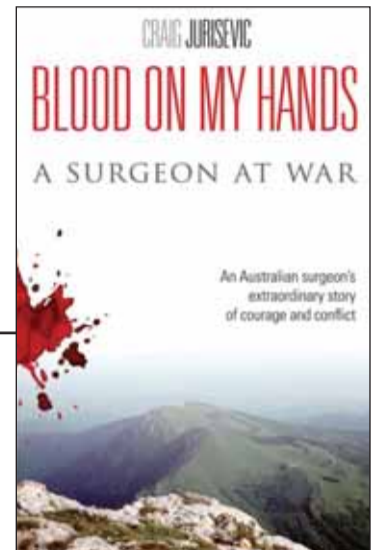
ing place in order to treat and retrieve the injured.

Craig decided to head to the frontline. The journey to Mount Pastrik range was a dangerous trek that took him along mined goat tracks. On the way he came under regular attack from Serbian sniper and artillery fire.

At the front he set up a primitive operating theatre in a cave, working long days while treating horrific injuries and even amputating limbs. He slept alongside the dead as bodies piled up in the cave that served as hospital, surgeon's quarters and morgue. "I sit in the cave with dead bodies rotting at the back, their reek growing riper in the awful heat," notes Craig in his book.

During that period, Craig led retrieval teams behind Serbian lines at night to rescue injured civilians from nearby villages. In consequence, he witnessed the aftermath of a massacre of women and children and saw at first hand the terrifying results of

'Blood on My Hands', co-written with Robert Hillman, will be available from May 1, published by Wild Dingo Press. For more details, see www.wilddingopress.com.au. The book will be on sale in Dukagjini Bookstore, Mother Teresa Boulevard, Prishtina.



Slobodan Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing.

One patrol led him to a sacked village where a horrifically injured woman had been left to die a slow death, surrounded by her murdered family. She pleaded with him to end her suffering, which he agreed to do, with the only means at hand - a Beretta pistol provided for his personal safety by the local KLA commander.

Keeping a promise he made to the dying woman, Craig carried the body of her little boy up into the mountains, burying him in a

grave overlooking the village. "At the frontline of the KLA in Pastrik I was the only doctor because all the other doctors stayed down in Cahan or Krume where it was far safer," he recalled.

"Only four or five commanders stayed at the front on Mount Pastrik, the remainder staying in Krume where it was infinitely safer and more comfortable."

The KLA fighters were left almost leaderless at the front, he said. "Apart from sporadic patrols behind Serb lines, some of which I led, there was little offensive action against Serb forces from May 30 onwards.

"The KLA soldiers were told not to assault Serb positions but to stay in their positions. [However,] these positions were exposed to heavy and accurate Serb mortar, artillery, Katyusha rocket and sniper fire, resulting in terrible losses, some 75 dead and 250 injured between June 1 and June 9, 1999," Jurisevic said.

Realising that the inexperienced recruits were being sent off to certain injury or even death, Craig took it upon himself to better equip the soldiers for their daunting tasks.

A skilled recreational shooter back home in Australia, and with combat military retrieval experience gained in Israel and Gaza in the early 1990s, he trained the youngsters in basic weapon handling and military field tactics.

"Earlier in my medical career I

had daily experience of the type of wounds being inflicted in Kosovo," he recalled, "wounds caused by automatic and semi-automatic weapons fire; by the explosion of anti-personnel mines, hand grenades, mortar rounds and artillery shells."

"In Israel, during the first Intifada of 1992 and 1993, I'd witnessed what bullets and shrapnel could do to the human body and I'd learnt how effective modern surgery could sometimes be in restoring the wounded to the world."

Asked why he joined the KLA, he said passed-down memories of his Slovenian grandfather's experience of the Second World War spurred him on.

"My Slovenian grandfather on my mother's side survived Dachau and Mauthausen (Nazi concentration camps)," he said. "Had I not felt roused to action by Milosevic's concentration camps, it would have been a betrayal of my memories of that gentle and compassionate man."

Work on the film is at early stages, Jurisevic told Prishtina Insight. It is hoped it will be released in 2011.



Craig Jurisevic, centre, while fighting with the KLA

ICJ Could Postpone Decision on Kosovo



By Bojana Barlovac

Serbian media have reported that the International Court of Justice, ICJ, could postpone until November this year the delivery of its opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence.

But Kosovo's foreign minister Skender Hyseni, in an interview given to Radio Kosovo, said he expected the ruling 'in June or July, at latest'.

Serbia's Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic reacted to the reports of a

possible delay, saying that such announcements were not good news.

"We want the opinion to be issued as soon as possible. The more time the court has for giving its opinion, the more pressure can be exerted on this body. Let us hope that the court will rule on this as soon as possible," he said.

Serbian daily Politika reported on Sunday, March 28, that the postponement is allegedly related to the international community's expectation that Serbia will by the November date be able to arrest and extradite war crimes suspect Ratko Mladic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, ICTY.

Court officials, however, have

said that a date for the issuing of the opinion has not been determined and that news outlets were only speculating.

Serbia's Jeremic denied reports linking the ICJ decision to the arrest of Mladic.

After Kosovo declared inde-

pendence in February 2008, Serbia, who rejects the country's independence, took the case to the ICJ.



The International Court of Justice chamber

Mount Everest Serves up Simple, Decent South Asian Food



By Maneater

I remembered having musty sushi at the location now occupied by Mount Everest Restaurant and Bar, the latest Asian eatery to hit town.

Although its predecessor failed to serve up anything remotely fresh – a must in any eatery let alone the sushi business – I was determined not to give in to my preconceptions when trying out the latest restaurant to take up the space.

Nevertheless, the evident absence of much needed changes to the previous tenant's shabby interior immediately lowered my initial attempts at fair-mindedness.

The restaurant consists of a small bar and dining area, and a more private second level overlooking a congested parking lot by the former UNMIK building.

The downtown location is, however, incredibly convenient, especially for those opting for takeout.

Mount Everest serves up Nepalese food, with an emphasis on Indian-influenced specialties. However, a page of Chinese favourites is also included in the menu, such as sweet and sour pork and chicken chow mein.

The venue's only waiter, a

local Albanian, let my dining partner and I know that the owners are Nepalese natives.

Although his statement highlighted authentic preparation, we later found out that it served as a disguise for his lack of knowledge concerning any cuisine other than his own.

Despite the awkwardness when ordering – primarily because of his tendency to compare menu options to Albanian dishes when offering descriptions – it was sort of amusing.

The menu slots into a series of chicken dishes, mutton specialties, curries, vegetarian options, and traditional soups, salads, and breads. Prices are quite reasonable.

After examining the menu at our dated terrace table, and glancing at the blow-up pictures of meals situated on the venue's business sign, we decided to begin with masala finger chips and vegetable samosas. For our mains, we went with chicken tikka masala and spicy mandrash chicken with boiled rice and Indian bread.

The fried samosas were acceptable, with a classic filling of potatoes, onions, green peas and South Asian seasoning, served with a side of green chutney and ketchup.

Similar ratings were appropriated for the masala finger chips, which are similar to regular French fries, upgraded with a crispy coating of fried



The garlic flat bread, or naan in Indian, is especially delicious. It's freshly prepared, rustically cut up into assorted shapes and coated with a hint of garlic butter.

seasoning.

The chicken dishes were both similar in appearance – chunks of meat smothered in thick aromatic sauces.

The tikka masala has a sweeter curry base, and was served hot and ready to combine with either crispy garlic flavoured flatbread or white basmati rice.

The garlic flat bread, or naan in Indian, is especially delicious. It's freshly prepared, rustically cut up into assorted shapes and coated with a hint of garlic butter.

Meanwhile, the spicy mandrash chicken provided more heat and stronger flavours of garlic and ginger. Every dish can be customised to your preferred level of heat.

There's nothing spectacular about Mount Everest's interi-

or, service, or meal presentation. However, it serves up simple, decent food and has an approachable menu without over-the-top embellishments.

What you see is what you get at Mount Everest, no more, and no less.

Those disappointed at the demise of Sushi Bar's Karaoke nights need not fear as Mount Everest has said it will roll out the machine if customers reserve.

Mount Everest is along the alleyway which connects Luan Haradinaj and Mother Teresa, and runs alongside the former UNMIK Building.

044 821 970



★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★☆☆	★★☆☆☆	★☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Spice of Life	Spice Odyssey	Spice Market	Spice it Up	Spiced Out	Spice Girls

Trepca's Haunting Beauty

While a visit to a now defunct mining region may not initially appeal, the area around Trepca is full of natural and manmade surprises.



By Lawrence Marzouk

Stan Terg and Trepca, in Kosovo's north west, were a powerhouse of Yugoslavia's mineral economy up to the 1980s.

But poor management, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the persecution of ethnic Albanian miners brought this proud mining area to its knees.

The mines are part of the giant Trepca conglomerate, which includes dozens of sites dotted across Kosovo, and which is today a shadow of its former self.

The decay and poverty of the Mitrovica valley is all too obvious

and unsurprising, but Stan Terg, Bajgora, and the surrounding mountains offer an interesting, if haunting, day trip from Prishtina.

One of Stan Terg's main attractions, the Crystal Museum, is currently closed, but it is hoped that it will be reopened and renovated by the end of May.

Located a little further up the hill from the museum is the fascinating remains of St Peter's Basilica, a 13th Century Saxon church, although the locals insisted it was an 'English Church' on my visit.

It is believed that the place of worship was built by Saxon settlers in Kosovo who, in the medieval period, were specialised in mining and metal extraction.

The basilica was used until the 16th century and is particularly

interesting because its architectural style and construction techniques are Gothic, while the frescoes decorating the interior are Byzantine.

If you are having trouble finding it, one of the very helpful locals will kindly point you in the right direction and possibly even show you the new spots that the miners are using for some 'freelance' work while waiting for the privatisation of Trepca.

Mining really picked up in the area after the British company, Selection Trust Ltd, began exploiting the rich reserves.

And their legacy is all too obvious to those familiar with British mining towns – terraced houses.

These quaint, if a little dilapidated, homes are a treat to those



A 13th Century Saxon Church in Stan Terg

interested in architecture, and are a bizarre sight when set against the communist era constructs.

Further along the road, you'll find the village of Bajgora, which is home to the ruins of the 500 year old Mazhiq Mosque.

The road becomes a dirt track here, but it also provides ideal hiking ground across the rolling hills

of this area.

Practicalities: To get there take the road to Mitrovica and carry on past the turn-off for the city until you reach a sign for Stan Terg/Bajgora. Stop off at one of the restaurants near Bajgora or at one of the fish restaurants along the River Ibar to the west of Mitrovica for food or refreshments.



By Shega A'Mula
in Prishtina

Inside Prishtina

Building Review:

Dodona Theatre

A Symbol of Cultural Resistance

Dodona's history goes way beyond the walls of its small yet celebrated theatre located in a Prishtina neighbourhood which quickly took the name of the institution after its construction in 1992.

Rabije Bajrami, and a string of other prominent art figures such as directors Melehate Qena, and Ismail Ymeri pushed the development of an alternative theatre in 1985, in order to combat what they saw as a cultural void within society.

"Driven by this cultural void in the lives of children and adults, I began to focus on the idea of establishing a new theatre that will play a huge role towards communities not only in the capital city, but also all of Kosovo", Bajrami wrote in a 2002 publication celebrating a decade of theatre productions at Dodona.

In 1986, Prishtina's municipality approved the establishment of a theatre on the site of Dodona, then

known as the Theatre for Youth, Children and Dolls.

Plays for children were held at various venues such as the Youth and Sports Palace, and hundreds of primary schools.

It was not until 1992 that the venue swapped its name for Dodona, after the famous pagan oracle thought to be of Illyrian descent.

Although the theatre's mission remained encouraging theatre interest in children, the team elected to also host performances aimed at adults, taking advantage of the two stages to accommodate their productions.

Dodona became a cultural phenomenon in the early 1990s, transforming itself into the epicentre of theatre and Albanian expression, and a recreational necessity for Albanians that did not have the luxury of enjoying cinema and television produced in Kosovo.

"During those years, Dodona became a symbol of theatre in Kosovo. For almost ten years, Dodona Theatre was the only cultural window in Kosovo, and, honestly, unique theatre and art in gen-

eral can be identified almost always with the name Dodona during that decade," said Rabije Bajrami.

The popularity of the Dodona was so high that even those with meagre finances went out of their way to enjoy a show at theatre.

"Those that did not have money to purchase the tickets discovered a way to get in free. They would climb on the roofs of neighbouring houses and then secretly enter through an upstairs window of Dodona Theatre," said Rabije Bajrami.

As Albanian schools and institutions faced closure by Serbian authorities, Dodona also became a temporary classroom, office space and meeting point for the Albanian community. And despite the risk, the show went on at the theatre.

Renowned actor and director Faruk Begolli described after the conflict this phenomenon as "a certain protest against the violence, a certain manifestation of pride and dignity, a form of no surrender".

The artistic protest did not end during the violent years of 1998-



Dodona Theatre in Prishtina's old town

99, even though the Dodona team was forced to seek refuge in Macedonia with thousands of other Kosovo Albanians.

They continued to organise theatrical productions in the neighbouring country, notably Enver Statovici's play "Who is to blame that I am Albanian".

After the end of the conflict, Dodona returned to Prishtina, and immediately began operations under Faruk Begolli, who became the new director.

Besides regular productions of pre-conflict favourites and new plays, Dodona partnered with UNICEF and travelled around Kosovo to perform educational plays urging children to protect themselves against the dangers of mines.

Although Dodona's budget was,

and remains, tiny compared to other theatres in the region, it has established itself as a stepping stone for new artists, actors and directors eager to expose their creativity.

More than 370 productions have been held at Dodona since the end of the conflict. Today, the theatre continues to hold plays for children during the day, in addition to ballet lessons throughout the week.

Adult-targeted productions are held in the evenings, with ticket prices costing 3 euro.

Dodona is located on Xhelal Mitrovica Street, and was recently renovated and now has a capacity of 167 in the main room.

For more information about plays call Tel 038 23 06 23 or check Prishtina Insight's Time Out page.

Bar Review:

Crème de la Crème

Although Crème de la Crème only operated for four months more than two years ago, the bar's return last week was met with much anticipation, as comments on its Facebook page prove. It has taken over the former Katra bar located in Pejton, and transformed it into a homier atmosphere to reflect its carefree mantra.

Guri Shkodra, member of local band The Dizzies and one of the original owners of Crème de la Crème, told Prishtina Insight that he and his friends scooped up the Katra location when they heard that it was closing down, because they always loved the layout of the bar.

The interior has been significantly altered, now providing a larger feel with buttery shades and minimal furniture.

The second level remains fairly similar, with a large sofa and loads of cushions for a more private gathering, while the basement is expected to turn into a serious dance floor with excellent earsplitting sounds.

The crème de la crème craze can be attributed to the owners' carefree attitude towards their business venture.

They admit that their primary motive for

running the bar is to have a place to drink for themselves, their friends, and then the rest of us. And the bar isn't their main source of earnings, as they all have busy day jobs.

But don't let their laidback nature turn you off. It helps to create a super-relaxed atmosphere, much like being over at someone's place.

Homey accents such as veggie sticks and mixed nuts are regularly served, along with many varieties of house wine and raki.

Cocktails are also a major focus at Crème de la Crème, with a bartender they hail as Mai Thai, due to his mixing skills.

Guri's iPhone application, which randomly selects cocktail recipes out of a super large collection, also serves as an amusing inspiration when ordering drinks.

Because of their very busy schedules, Crème de la Crème is currently only open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights, although that might change in the future. Themed nights will be organised, such as this Friday's Psychedelic Bollywood Funk night.

Address: Mujo Ulqinaku, Pejton



Crème de la Crème combines style and a homely atmosphere



Ginger is a treasure trove of books, CDs and DVDs

Shop Review:

Ginger

In the new world of MP3s and e-books, it's comforting to know that some places like Ginger are keeping it old school.

At this downtown music, book and film store, the most groundbreaking piece of technology is probably the decades old CRT television playing films in the front window.

Ginger has been around for eight years now, and was previously in the Pejton neighborhood.

Now it's located in an apartment tunnel beside the UNMIK building in downtown, only further emphasising its urban attitude.

The majority of goods at Ginger are in English, with a few foreign language options such as Italian, French, and Japanese films (with English subtitles), and Balkan music ranging in genres from rock to classical.

All films and music are either original or reproduced from an original copy, which means that quality is good.

Books on the other hand vary from fiction to social and political themes, both in

paperback and hardback. Prices start at 3euro, but can reach double digits for some works.

The young staff at Ginger will not stand over you or attempt to guide you to a certain publication. They insist on giving visitors their own space, even if that means hours.

In fact, they're usually sipping coffee with a customer, or reading something on their own. The endless stacks of books, hard-to find films, and soft backdrop of jazzy music do make it hard to leave.

One of my favourite features of Ginger is that commercial titles are hard to come by, leaving room for more unconventional genres such as Persian poetry or Italian Opera.

Ginger accepts orders for books, which are usually shipped over from the US. Music and Film requests can also be met.

Ginger; 82 Edith Durham Street.
Tel: 049 126 305



Mixed Reactions in Serbia, Bosnia to Srebrenica Resolution

While most Serbs applaud a step forward, most Bosniaks seem indifferent, skeptical of Serbia's motives, or are critical of the failure to call the crime an act of genocide.



By Bojana Barlovac
and Sabina Arslanagic

The adoption of the resolution on Srebrenica in the Serbian parliament has drawn mixed reactions in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some criticised the fact that the text does not use the word "genocide", while others object to the fact that the resolution does not address crimes committed by all parties in the wars of the 1990s.

In Serbia 127 deputies voted for the resolution out of 250, but not all deputies were present for the vote – 21 voted against the resolution, with one abstention.

The resolution condemned the massacre of more than 8,000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995 and extended an apology to the families of the victims for not doing everything possible to prevent the massacre. It did not call the crime genocide.

"The National Assembly of Serbia harshly condemns the crime committed against the Bosniak residents of Srebrenica in July 1995 ... expressing condolences and apology to the victims' families because not all was done to prevent this tragedy," the declaration reads.

As good as could be expected:

A number of Serbian politicians and NGOs praised the adoption of the declaration, marking it as a significant step forward. Serbian President Boris Tadic said that "by adopting the declaration, the parliament and the Serbian people have clearly distanced themselves from this monstrous crime."

Dusan Bogdanovic, from the Serbian NGO Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, YUCOM, told Balkan Insight that some NGOs in Serbia had been pushing for the adoption of such a document for a long time. "The resolution passed in parliament, regardless of a few negative aspects related to the text itself and the discussion that followed, is a big step forward for Serbia," Bogdanovic said.

He stressed that it was only a first step in Serbia's process of dealing with its past. When asked to comment on the text itself, Bogdanovic said that in light of the fact that parliament was constrained by a "public that still doesn't have a very mature political and moral awareness", the text could not have been better.

In a written statement, the prime minister of Vojvodina, Bojan Pajtic, said: "By adopting the Declaration on Srebrenica a great burden has been taken off of the Serbian people and a ten-



Mourners at Srebrenica

dency has been initiated for other countries in the region to do the same."

Cedomir Jovanovic, of the Liberal Democratic Party, however, criticised the resolution for not branding the Srebrenica killings as genocide. "We wanted a completely different resolution but apparently that is not possible," he told parliament. "Our society does not have sufficient strength."

Sonja Biserko, from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, believes the government was constrained by the nationalists in how far it could go. "This was the maximum that could be delivered right now," she told the BBC. "But I worry that the government was motivated more by pressure from the EU than by a genuine feeling of remorse."

Some nationalist politicians strongly objected to the resolution because it specifically addressed Srebrenica and did not include other crimes committed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

The spokesperson for the opposition Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS, Petar Petkovic, told Prishtina Insight that Serbia "has shown that it divides victims on the basis of their national and religious affiliation". The DSS wanted a resolution that would condemn all the crimes committed during the wars in former Yugoslavia.

An organisation that groups Serbian associations of families of missing persons in the former Yugoslavia said it questioned whether the gravity of a crime could be measured by numbers alone. "Even if we do that [measure crimes by numbers], don't you think that the 47,000 Serbs killed from Slovenia to Kosovo do not deserve a similar declaration?" the organisation asked.

Dragan Todorovic, from the opposition Serbian Radical Party, said the declaration was

one of the worst resolutions ever adopted in the Serbian parliament. "The resolution will only damage Serbia, and the extent of that damage is not yet known," he told Balkan Insight.

Doubts and disappointment:

Some Bosnian politicians said the declaration adopted in Serbia was not an honest condemnation of the massacre in Srebrenica, while others worried it would lead to new divisions in the country.

Hatidza Mehmedovic, president of the association Mothers of Srebrenica, which represents families of the victims of Srebrenica, said Serbia had adopted the declaration only "out of its own interests, because of its European aspirations."

"This means nothing to us; if they really regretted what happened in Srebrenica they would have arrested [former Bosnian Serb commander Ratko] Mladic," Mehmedovic told Prishtina Insight.

Mehmedovic, who lost two sons, her husband and all her male relatives in the massacre, also said she was disgusted with the debate in the Serbian parliament and with the way some people still "play with the numbers and claim that genocide in Srebrenica is our fabrication."

Ilijaz Pilav, who worked as a surgeon in Srebrenica during the war and today is a deputy in the Republika Srpska parliament, told Prishtina Insight that "by failing to use the word genocide, Serbia had again insulted the victims".

Hasan Nuhanovic, who worked as interpreter for the Dutch Battalion in Srebrenica and never again saw his family again after they were evicted from the base, agrees that Serbia needed the declaration to improve its image in the eyes of

Brussels, but that did not necessarily mean it was a bad idea. "We do not have to reject things that Serbia does because it is doing them in its own interest," Nuhanovic said.

However, Nuhanovic stressed that "Serbia needs this declaration; I do not need it. Serbia needs to face its own past; it is their problem, not mine. What I need from Serbia is to get actively involved in war crimes prosecutions, particularly by prosecuting its citizens who committed crimes in Bosnia," he said.

Despite reflecting on the fact that the declaration does not include the world genocide and is as such deficient, the Bosniak member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, Haris Silajdzic, said that it was a "sign of good will".

"The condemnation of the crime and apology to the families of victims expressed in the declaration...can be interpreted as a sign of good will," Silajdzic told vijesti.ba news portal.

Silajdzic also commended the courage and resolve of the people in Serbia "who fought to properly name what happened" in Srebrenica.

He stressed that the process which resulted in the adoption of the declaration had shown that the number of brave people in Serbia fighting for true reconciliation in the region and its European future is not insignificant.

Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated region in Bosnia, called the adoption of the resolution "unnecessary", adding that it would not "contribute to resolution of disputes over the events from our recent past". In a statement, Dodik said he would soon launch an initiative for the adoption of a declaration condemning genocide committed by Croatia against Serbs, Jews and Roma during the Second World War.

News in Brief

Greece Could Accept "Northern Macedonia"

Greece could accept the name "Northern Macedonia" for its northern neighbor as a possible solution to the long lasting name row, Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droustas was quoted as saying by Greek media.

In a comment carried by the Athens weekly "Real News" on Sunday, Droustas said that the possible name "North Macedonia" falls within the framework of a solution that Athens desires, Greek ANA/MPA news agency informed. Other news outlets reported that Droustas referred to the "Republic of Northern Macedonia".

Should Macedonian authorities reject this proposal, "it will be up to them to explain to their people why the country's European perspective has been withheld," Droustas said on the same occasion, as quoted by Macedonian MIA news agency.

Skopje and Athens are locked in a nearly two decade long spat over the use of the name Macedonia. Greece, a member of NATO and the EU, conditions its neighbour's entry into these organisations on a resolution to the dispute.



'Captain Dragan' Still on the Run

Australian police are still looking for Dragan Vasiljkovic, also known as Captain Dragan, who has been missing since the country's High Court ruled on March 30 that he could be extradited to Croatia to face war crimes charges.

Australian media have reported that Vasiljkovic may have fled the country with a forged or borrowed passport.

Dragan Vasiljkovic, who led a paramilitary unit called the Red Berets during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, disappeared last week after his fourth appeal against his extradition was rejected by the High Court in Canberra.

Croatian authorities suspect Vasiljkovic of responsibility for crimes committed in 1992 in the area of Knin.

Vasiljkovic was born in Serbia, but moved to Australia with the family when he was 14. He came back to the region at the end of eighties and joined the paramilitary unit when the war started. He moved back to Australia in 1997, where he is a citizen.

Croatia issued a warrant for his arrest in 2004, and he was arrested in Australia in 2006 but later released in the midst of the ongoing appeals process against his extradition.

Police have checked boats on the east coast, where Vasiljkovic had been living. An experienced yachtsman, they fear he may have already sailed from Australia.

KFOR General: 'I'm happy our Adverts Provoke'

KFOR's cheesy adverts have achieved cult status – mostly not for the right reason. A Facebook group set up to chronicle the NATO force's attempt to foster a more tolerant Kosovo and improve its own image has almost 3,000 followers, many of whom complain that the posters and television ads do little more than 'insult people's intelligence'. But, in an interview with BIRN, KFOR General defended his force's output.



By Petrit Collaku

Petrit Collaku: General Markus Bentler, knowing that you are a busy person, have you ever had a chance to look at the KFOR TV public service announcements?

General Bentler: Sure I see them.

Q: We have a large number of viewers constantly complaining about most of KFOR TV advertisements. Those people say that "is KFOR aware that most of KFOR Public Service Announcements [PSAs] are very disturbing?"

A: I do not know whether they are disturbing. We also get these messages and in a certain way I am even happy with this. In a certain way, if they provoke and start some thinking it is positive for us.

It's better for me if they talk about this, and the overall opinion of the people about KFOR cannot be too bad because we have risen quite sharply in our image again. You can do communications and I do not want to argue, there are good ones and there are better ones and there are also ones you do not like. It is a matter of taste.

What we like to do in very simple facts is to convey what really has changed and what KFOR is all about.

Q: People don't have a problem seeing commercials with Dejan and Genc playing basketball together, promoting multi-ethnicity, but can you promise to have a word with your Psyops guys and insist on some tastier announcements?



A: Can you give us an example what you don't like?

Q: The soldier building up his muscles.

A: That is great. I do that sometimes in the gym. What is wrong with that?

Q: What about the couple by the lakeshore and there are suddenly three helicopters. What is the message?

A: The message from those who made it – or the skiers coming down the mountain – is that KFOR is there, you will see KFOR, KFOR is present, KFOR is mobile.

Q: So the couples are not allowed to kiss because KFOR is there and is watching you?

A: They are allowed to kiss. I didn't prevent it, they could have continued. In this movie they stop it because they were surprised. The message is that KFOR is there, KFOR is a friendly force, KFOR is with the people and everybody who has seen it has some fun and we were smiling about this. If some people don't feel attracted to it...

Q: You said you like the gym advertisement and there is a soundtrack of James Brown's 'I Feel Good'. Just out of curiosity, did KFOR pay for the authors' right for using this so?

A: I believe so. What we do is legally based. I have all the trust in my people that they do the right things.

Dear Teta Mia...



Teta Mia solves your problems

What's in a vacuum?

Mr Hoover, Prishtina

Ah, Mr Hoover, many thanks for sending me whizzing back to my school Physics lessons! A perfect vacuum has a gaseous pressure of zero, but even in Outer Space, there's always a little bit of something inside a so-called vacuum, and a perfect vacuum is never in reality achieved.

Even in Kosovo, which is as close as we can get to Outer Space on Earth, there are fragments of stuff binding us together.

Take the roads, or rather, the drivers. The State through the good offices of the Kosovo Police is steadily filling the vacuum of previously almost lawless driving. The dreaded "radar" is having an effect, and most of us are gradually slowing down, albeit unhelped by the often random speed limits displayed on the roadsides.

But the KP haven't yet dared to sort out the roundabouts. I count five major roundabouts in Prishtina city, each one governed by a different law of physics.

The roundabout on the Podujevo road out of town has different priorities for different exits; the roundabout up to Sunny Hill from Hotel Victory and the one on the Obiliq road give priority to those already on the roundabout; to head to Ferizaj, one gives way in turn; and the mother of all roundabouts, where arterial routes from Peja, Mitrovica and Ferizaj converge, is ruled by the law of the jungle.

But while the absence of the State in the form of traffic police and universally understood rules of the road should imply chaos, drivers in Prishtina somehow know these different highway codes, and manage to get from A to B in a roundabout sort of way.

Similarly, there is a vacuum of sorts in information. Nothing exemplifies this better than the confusion surrounding the new legal requirements for foreigners to register to work in Kosovo. Law no. 03/L-136 On Granting Permit for Work and Employment of Foreign Citizens in the Republic of Kosovo, promulgated on 17 July 2009, requires foreigners to register for one of eight different types of work permit in order to work legally.

Exempt from this as stated in Article 13 are, inter alia, diplomats, employees of not-for-profit organisations, executive directors and important employees of foreign companies who operate or aim to operate in the Republic of Kosovo, goods and people cross-border transport personnel, media representatives with foreign employers, religious representatives, and university students.

There is almost always an abundance of knowledge in Kosovo, if you know where to look, or more importantly, whom to ask. But this law on foreign workers obviously targets foreigners – and so locals who are in all other cases a wealth of information, just don't know the answer here.

I wonder how much time it will take a bright, entrepreneurial lawyer to fill this information vacuum and make a million advising solely on work permits (and if you already exist, put your details on Teta Mia's Facebook...).

In this information vacuum, Kosovars thrive. The legacy of the hobbled press of the 1990s (and, sadly, since) has meant that the local societal networks for sharing information are extremely efficient, particularly in times of crisis. The notorious fall (and of course un-fall) of the government during a night of heavy drinking in Zanzibar was communicated through text message within two minutes of its occurrence.

Word of mouth in Kosovo, via cafes and odas, and more recently Web 2.0 social networking sites and SMSs, is by far the quickest way of distributing and receiving information. The downside is that misinformation – and disinformation – can be shared equally quickly, but Kosovars in the main know whom to trust for these nuggets of emergency gossip.

So again, into the vacuum has slipped society. This is astonishingly strong here, and its bonds hold Kosovars together where the State cannot.

In answer, then, to your question, Mr Hoover, there is always something in a vacuum. Where the State fails, or disappears, or isn't capable, or doesn't care, Kosovar society fills the space. To survive, you must learn, among other things, the unwritten rules of the roundabout.

Outside In

Public Lynching featuring Memli



By Kreshnik Hoxha

Being a rap singer and a government spokesperson must be a pain in the neck. Just think about the strenuous efforts in choosing between your baggy rap trousers and the suits you wear in the corridors of power.

Think of those political interviews when you just can't resist the temptation of nicking the microphone from the journalists to do some MC-ing.

Well, to date, Memli Krasniqi has done a smashing job in drawing the line. But, it's a shame that his rap passion is boiling up again.

It all kicked off with Mr Krasniqi making statements which civil society interpreted as the equivalent of calling

for a 'public lynching' of one of its members.

Mr Krasniqi compared comments about government corruption, made by a respected civil society activist, to the kind of statements made by agents of Serbia, and complained that these meddling members of civil society were lowering their country in the eyes of the international community.

If Mr Krasniqi's reading of the world tells him that internationals suffer from some sort of myopia, he should be assured that nothing can blur the image of the vicious circle the current leadership has fallen into.

The least you would expect from someone holding a Master's degree from LSE is to be fully capable of avoiding confusions between rap lyrics and political declarations.

It is no surprise that in a political climate where politics is increasingly the

master of the media, individuals who challenge the credibility of this leadership get labelled as Serbian collaborators. Neither is this news for Kosovo, nor is it unexpected.

What makes it bitter to digest, however, is the fact that this vulgar rhetoric originates from the heart of the government, by the chap who is directly responsible for addressing the public with the most politically correct announcements.

Sadly, Mr Krasniqi has fallen short in fulfilling his basic duties. And by doing so he has violated the core values of public relations and demonstrated that diplomacy is really not his cup of tea.

Nobody is perfect and everyone makes mistakes.

But, Mr Krasniqi, and his government, cannot afford to make too many more errors of judgment when it comes to such serious accusations.

Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims: A Voice for the Voiceless



By Petrit Collaku

“There is a saying that time heals wounds, but in Kosovo it is different,” executive director Feride Rushiti, of the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims, explains to Prishtina Insight.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, still haunts Kosovo families struggling with memories of the war, and these problems are compounded by a rapidly changing lifestyle and modern stresses, according to the KRCT.

The centre has treated some 15,000 people since 1999 and today the centre has 100 clients.

Rushiti said that the centre continues to offer individual, group and family psycho-social treatment.

“There are many problems inside the community. The trans-generational syndrome is one of them,” Rushiti told Prishtina Insight.

She said that post-traumatic stress disorder has not been dealt with effectively in Kosovo because of the poor economy and radical changes in life-style.

“That’s why we have violence in schools, many drug abusers, and also suicide,” Rushiti explained.

For the tenth year, KRCT will

mark June 26, the International Day for Victims of Torture.

“The Kosovo government can do at least something symbolic for victims of torture such as commemorations, publications of truth, forums, courts, etc,” Rushiti added.

Since 2008, KRCT has been monitoring detention centres and imprisonment in police stations, monitoring the standards of human rights.

The report for 2009 stresses the improvements since the previous year, such as a decline in the excessive use of force, employment of a psychiatrist in Mitrovica detention centre, and renovations in some detention centres.

But the report also expresses con-

cerns on the lack of categorisation of detainees based on age, crime, risk and health status.

The report also warned about the duration of those being held on remand, which was up to one year.

Another concern for KRCT about detention centres is the poor supply of hygienic products and lack of medicine.

KRCT is part of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, an umbrella organisation for more than 140 independent torture rehabilitation organisations in more than 70 countries.

For more information visit www.krct.org

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Prishtina Diary

Thursday, April 8

KINO TETRIS

Me, My Gypsy Family and Woody Allen (party/movie/TV night); 7 pm. Location: Mark Isak 24, Prishtine

Me, my Gipsy family & Woody Allen is the story of the Laura Halilovic family who came to Italy from Bosnia Herzegovina at the end of the 60s, and lived in caravans until 1996. It is an intimate portrayal of the end of a nomadic lifestyle and the difficulties of settling into a council flat.

Told in the first person, with irony and wit, the film documents the process of Laura accepting her origins.

According to her family, she should already be married, but she is determined to decide for herself and fight for her dream: to become a film director. The film is a portrait of a small community made from the perspective of an insider, presenting a different, deeply personal insight into Roma culture.

Friday, April 9

Duplex Club

The DJ Jungle vs. The DJ Flow



Spray Club

From 10 pm, Bedrock night at Spray Club with Luis Junior, Madrid, and warm up Uran B. And VJ by MuM

Luis Junior was born in Madrid, Spain, in 1973. He is one of the most outstanding producers, DJs and radio-DJs in the Spanish electronic music scene. He operates under different names, such as B-Flow, Fünkana, Fluflo and Nuits De Sons. He has released various vinyls and albums in different styles, such as downtempo, ambient, techno, trance and house. Luis Junior is recognised for his high quality sound production skills, and has mastered and mixed different works for other artists.

Saturday, April 10

Duplex Club

Skopje's DJ Boogiemann Returns with his Fresh & Hottest Hip Hop Vybez



TETRIS LIVE

From 10 pm, Dizraeli, Engurland (City Shanties), 2euro

Having picked up a string of awards as a slam poet (including BBC Radio 4 National Poetry Slam Winner and Farrago UK Slam Champion) and made his name on stages around the world as the frontman for the hip-hop band Bad Science, the rapper, singer and multi-instrumentalist Dizraeli has gone solo to craft his very own album.

He says: "hiphop is folk music for the modern age; real stories of ordinary people, spoken in their own voices. 'It's music that takes part in our everyday conversations, and isn't afraid to name names. I love that."



Sunday, April 11

Stacion

11 am, Ghosts of Dreams Deferred

Curator: Fatos Ustek
Artists: Anita di Bianco, Young In Hong, Laura Kuch, Hidde van Schie, Lindsay Seers.
Ghosts of Dreams Deferred is an exhibition of haunting work, bringing together five different artistic approaches and practices.

Saturday, April 17

Teatri ODA

From 10 pm, KSClubber & Next Level presents Eelke Kleijn; Warm up: HendiKeps; Visuals by MuM

In 2003 Eelke released his first single "4.5 Billion Years" on Segment Records. This very limited 12 inch drew the attention of John Digweed and Seb Fontaine and is still held in high regard up to this day. It was not until early 2006 however, that Eelke would indefinitely make an impact on the dance scene. Spring 2007 saw Eelke taking the next leap towards fulfilling his dreams. Months of labour finally paid off when his debut artist album 'Naturally Artificial' was snapped up by Global Underground.

National Theatre of Kosovo

Saturday, April 10, 2010, at 8 pm,

The play Norway Today by Igor Bauresima, directed by Zana Hoxha Krasniqi (Small Hall of the National Theatre)

Tuesday, April 13, 2010 at 8 pm,

The play Closer by Patric Marber, directed by Kushtrim Koloqi.

Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 8 pm,

The play The Death and the Girl by Ariel Dorfman, directed by Fatos Berisha.



Ticket Price: 3 Euros. All plays are in Albanian.



Continues to show the animated movie Cloudy Meat Balls.

The movie follows a scientist trying to solve the world food crisis, but things get complicated and the food raining from the sky doesn't stop. The film is based on a children's book. The film will be screened at 2pm, 4pm, and 6pm every day. The movie lasts for 1 hour and 21 min.

For more information, check ABC's website www.kinoabc.com or call 038 243 117

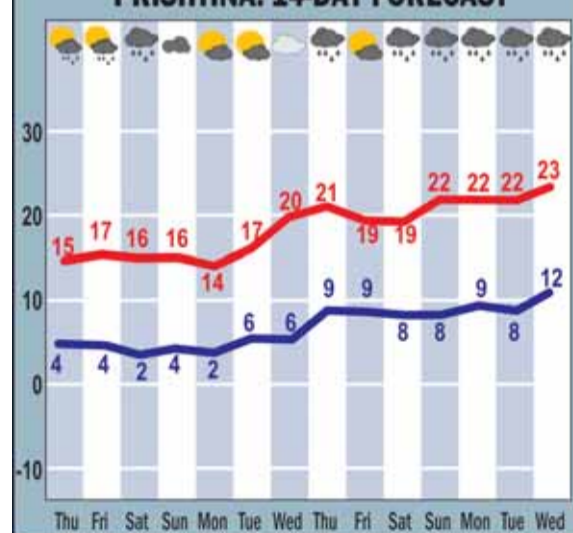
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