

Prishtina Insight

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Businesses Slam Maternity Leave Extension

A new labour law has angered the Kosovo business community after it extended maternity leave from four months to a year

See Page 6

ELECTION SPECIAL

Dead President Rugova Still On Electoral Roll

> page 3

NEWS

Serbia 'Starting Kosovo Talks Empty-handed'



> page 5

BUSINESS

Delays Risk Kosovo's World Bank Aid

> page 6

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Business Booms for Croatia's Gigolos

> page 11

Poll Errors Raise Fears For Kosovo Election

Concerns have been raised about the preparedness of Kosovo's election bodies and its largest monitoring mission after both admitted making serious errors in a municipal poll.

By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo's Central Election Commission, the CEC, and the country's largest monitoring mission, Democracy in Action, have admitted making mistakes in counting the votes in Sunday's local election in the southwestern town of Rahovec, handing second place to the wrong party.

It has emerged that the Rahovec Municipal Election Commission, responsible for gathering the results for the CEC, failed to include the votes from three polling stations in the preliminary

results announced on Monday.

The error put the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, in first place with 28.3 per cent and the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, in second place with 26.9 per cent. The Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, candidate, Smajl Latifi, came third with 25.8 per cent. According to these results, the PDK and LDK would have contested the second round on December 19.

The revised results showed put the LDK on 27.65 per cent, the AAK on 26.72 per cent and the PDK on 26.55 per cent.

Democracy in Action also made mistakes in counting the votes in

two of the three polling stations forgotten by the CEC. During the communications process between monitors at the polling stations and those inputting data at the headquarters in Prishtina, votes were switched between PDK and AAK, again putting the PDK in second place.

The AAK announced on Monday that it would contest the results after it discovered that the three polling stations had not been included. It said the errors had deprived it of 457 votes and its rightful second place in the election.

On Wednesday, both Democracy in Action and the CEC confirmed

their mistakes, and handed the second place in the poll to the AAK.

The discovery that major errors had occurred in a small municipal election has raised concerns about how ready Kosovo's institutions will be to run a national election in two weeks' time.

The former leader of Democracy in Action, which will field more than 4,000 monitors in the general election, rather than 71, as it did on Sunday, said the errors had damaged the organisation and did not bode well for the December 12 vote.

continues page 2



Organ Trade Charges Rock Kosovo

Kosovo's medical establishment has been rocked by allegations that one of its top doctors was the ringleader of an international organ trafficking gang, which lured desperately poor people to Prishtina to sell their kidneys.

Dr Lutfi Dervishi...

feature

page 12-13



Kosovo's Mysterious Dialect Fades Away

The small town of Rahovec in the fertile Dukagjin valley of western Kosovo is mainly famed for its wines, which mix varieties plucked from all over the world.

But one local blend that is less well known is the area's unique local dialect, which mingles elements...

culture

page 15

Editor's Word Premtimi



By Lawrence Marzouk

I'm giving up on journalism. There's no money in it.

I've been inspired to set up my own political party called 'Vote for Me and I'll Give You Some Money Party (I Promise)'.

It's quite a simple concept, you see, and will go down like a free buffet at a homeless disco among the poor masses of Kosovo.

If you vote for me, I'll give you a pay rise. That's it, simple.

It's a little bit like driving around throwing lots of money out of the window, expect it's probably legal and more targeted.

And the great thing about this plan is that I will not have to spend a dime, because the money I'll be giving out will be the money I will have collected in taxes from other people who didn't vote for me.

It's a bit like reusing a present from someone you don't like with the cunning use of a pretty bow in the hope that the decoration will divert attention from the fact that the box of chocolates is out of date.

I was thinking that I might start by offering the teachers some extra cash, but then that quick-witted Hashim Thaci got in before me with his worked-out-on-the-back-of-an-envelope announcement.

You see, teachers are great because there are lots of them, earn little and vote a lot.

Still, at least the police is left. They are on a measly 250 euros a month, so don't they deserve similar treatment?

Then, I'll move on to doctors and maybe throw in the odd sop to dustbin men, if I can find any, and in no time I will be Prime Minister.

Unless, of course, Thaci, or one of those other cheque-book politicians gets there before me.

I'll have to be fast, so will head down to Mother Teresa now with my soapbox.

So, when you see me hollowing out 'Vote for Me and I'll Give you Some Money (I Promise)', please sign up to the party.

And if you have any doubts about my honesty, just remember the premtimi, or promise, bit of the party name.

I wouldn't lie to you, would I? I'm a politician now, after all.

Convicted Kosovo Candidates Exploit Loophole

Concerns about Kosovo's image have been raised after it emerged that the candidate list for the December 12 election includes a series of politicians who are suspected of serious crimes and others who have been convicted but are allowed to stand because they are appealing



By Petrit Collaku

The number of politicians standing in Kosovo's general election next month who have been convicted or are under criminal investigations could hamper Kosovo's European Union integration, civil society members are warning.

According to Kosovo's law on general election, a candidate cannot be certified if he or she has been convicted of a crime within the previous three years. But because the law says the ban applies only following a "final decision", those lodging appeals can still stand.

The Central Election Commission, CEC, last week certified the list of all candidates of political parties for the December 12 snap poll, giving the public two days to make complaints about would-be parliamentarians.

But as no complaints were received, even candidates who had been convicted of an offence and were not under appeal, such as Albin Kurti, leader of the nationalist Vetevendosje movement, have been included on the list.

A total of three party leaders have either been convicted or accused of crimes, and another three of the top ten candidates for the country's largest party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, are under police investigation or have been convicted.

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's PDK's list includes Fatmir Limaj, the Minister of Transport, who is under investigation for corruption, and Azem Sylja, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA.

Sylja is under investigation by the EU's rule of law mission, EULEX, after a self-declared assassin, Nazim Bllaca, went public about his crimes in November 2009, implicating Sylja in the work of Kosovo's unofficial secret service, SHIK, which has been officially disbanded.

Sylja, who was also an important figure in the Kosovo Liberation Army, has been interviewed by EULEX and has had his house searched. No charges have, however, been pressed.

The third PDK candidate, Rustrem Mustafa, was sentenced last October to four years for war crimes but has appealed.

The leader of the biggest opposition party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, Ramush Haradinaj is leading the list while in detention at The Hague, awaiting a retrial.

Another party leader seeking votes from the electorate is former assembly speaker Nexhat Daci, the head of the Democratic League of Dardania. He was found guilty by a Prishtina court on November 10 of "misappropriation in office", which included taking more than 1,000 euro of public funds to buy himself new spectacles and have dental work performed in 2005. He was sentenced to a one-and-a-half year suspended sentence but has appealed.

Also, the CEC has confirmed the Self-determination movement leader Albin Kurti as a candidate. Kurti was given a nine months suspended sentence in June for his role in February 2007 riots, but was released immediately. Since then he has been under home arrest.

"We have allowed them [to stand] because there is no final decision about their cases and they have the right to appeal,"



Elections take place on December 12

Fehmi Ajvazi, the CEC spokesman, told Balkan Insight. He added that Commission had given the public 24 hours to appeal.

Deputy head of EULEX Andy Sparkes said that while everyone accepts the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty', the decision to run such candidates did nothing for Kosovo's image.

"In my personal view, where someone is publicly known to be under investigation or judicial procedure, it would be better and more honourable, and better for the reputation of Kosovo, if they would not present themselves for public office until they have cleared their names," Sparkes told journalists.

The NGO FOL movement supported the statement of Sparkes after he was attacked for his comments by pro-government publications.

It said that political parties should show democratic maturity and filter out such candidates.

"FOL asks political parties not to use the legal gaps to present people under criminal procedures, which will harm Kosovo's image and will distance the country further from the process of

visa liberalisation and from integration of EU," FOL said in a statement.

"Also, we ask the CEC, state prosecutor and Kosovo police to cooperate better during the certification of candidates."

Anti-corruption NGO COHU said that there had been no legal violations because the system deliberately contained loopholes.

Avni Zogiani, the organisation's head, said: "Technically there has been no violation on this issue, but the judicial system is regulated in such a way that it can accommodate political violations," Zogiani told Prishtina Insight.

Agim Zogaj, head of the political science department at Pristina University, claimed that the 'name issue' had been over-dramatised.

"We should not be influenced by prejudices," Zogaj told Prishtina Insight. He added that most of the names running for the coming elections have been proven to be important names in Kosovo's history.

"According to the law they have the right to run for elections and this is democracy," he added.

Poll Errors Raise Fears For Kosovo Election

from page 1

Leon Malazogu told Prishtina Insight that he doubted that the mistakes were of a technical nature in the headquarters. He fears votes may have been switched in polling stations.

"The organisation is based on volunteers and it is never 100-per-cent sure which volunteers are involved," Malazogu said.

He added that political parties have the same problems with volunteers because their monitors were also sometimes "bought off" by rival

parties.

The AAK, meanwhile, has launched an attack on Democracy in Action, saying that "Kosovo's civil society was not playing its role" on Sunday.

An international source close to the election process raised concerns about the CEC's failure to spot the errors earlier on, given that it involved just one municipality with 71 polling stations.

Xhemail Pecani, head of the CEC's secretariat, insisted that the mistake was not a major issue.

"There was a technical error... and the ballots

from three polling stations were not included in the preliminary results," Pecani told Prishtina Insight. "When we checked all the paperwork that arrived in Prishtina, we saw there was a mistake," he said.

Ismet Kryeziu, Leader of Democracy in Action, told Prishtina Insight that the "mistake was very serious but we are human and we make mistakes."

"Data was wrongly entered into the database and the mistake was made in two polling stations," he told the TV programme Life in Kosovo.



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Dead President Rugova Still On Kosovo Electoral Roll

Ibrahim Rugova has again appeared on the list of voters in the website of the Central Election Commission for the elections due on December 12.



By Petrit Collaku

The name of Kosovo's first president, Ibrahim Rugova, who died in 2006, has again appeared on the electoral roll on the website of the Central Election Commission for general elections due on December 12.

Rugova's name did not appear on the list for the 2009 local elections after having previously been present on the list for the 2007 elections.

The presence of the Kosovo's first president on the electoral roll comes despite campaigns before the 2007 and 2009 polls to eradicate dead people on the voters' list.

Kosovo's interior ministry, in charge of updating the registry, said the most recent list was compiled and altered on the basis of death certificates supplied by the municipalities.

Blerim Camaj, head of the registry agency, said officials in charge of updating the voting list were 99 per cent certain that they had eliminated deceased people from

the list. "It might be another person called Ibrahim Rugova," Camaj told Prishtina Insight, despite the fact that the Rugova on the electoral roll shares the same birthday.

He added that it is usually up to families to report the deaths of relatives to their municipal authorities. However, "It is a custom of people in Kosovo not to report the deaths of family members, which creates problems".

Camaj said the electoral roll had been sent to the Central Election Commission ten days ago, and it was too late to make changes. "It's too late now," he said, "but it would be good if the media reminded people to report the deaths of loved ones."

But the Central Election Commission, CEC, which in charge of organising next months snap poll, told Prishtina Insight that the list is "preliminary" and can be updated by citizens between November 22 and 26. CEC spokesman Fehmi Ajvazi could not, however, offer any explanation to why Rugova's name had reappeared on the list after having been removed for the 2009 elections.

"We continue to have problems with people who do not report deaths of family members to the courts," he said, adding that they

Rugova's voting page on the CEC website

must pay 20 euro and send a letter to the municipality to ensure that their loved-one's name is removed.

Rugova is not the only deceased person on the voting list. Prishtina Insight has checked the names of other deceased persons whose families said they reported the deaths to the Prishtina municipality, in spite of which their names also appear on the list of voters.

Prishtina Insight reported in September that one 123-year-old woman, and another aged 120-year-old, had voted in November last year. If both had been alive they would represent the oldest people on earth.

But according to the most recent electoral roll, they remain registered to vote.

Rugova's name was removed from the website last night after Prishtina Insight contacted the CEC.

Grenade Attack on Kosovo Serb Election Candidate

A grenade attack on the home of a Kosovo Serb candidate in the Prishtina-run poll is the latest sign of the growing tension in the country's north.

Dragan Stojkovic, who last year ran for mayor of the Serb-dominated town of Zvečan, in the north of the country, announced his candidacy for Kosovo's parliament last Thursday, representing the Serbian Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija, SDSKIM.

Just after midnight on Monday, Stojkovic's home was targeted with one M-75 grenade, an explosive device made during the Yugoslav period, according to Kosovo police. He was last attacked in similar fashion in September.

The door to his shop was damaged in the blast but no-one was injured.

The attack comes just days after the Serbian government called on Kosovo Serbs to boycott Prishtina-run elections on December 12.

Stojkovic told Prishtina Insight: "Now, this [attack] gives you a picture of whether the Serb community here will go out and vote."

The elections represent the second to have taken place in Kosovo since the declaration of independence of February 2008.

Local elections in November last year were deemed a success of a good turnout of the Serb community across much of Kosovo, despite calls from Belgrade not to vote.

But in the country's troubled north, which is home to most of Kosovo's Serbs and which borders Serbia, virtually no Serbs visited the mobile polling stations set up.

The area has been the scene of mounting tension in recent months, including inter-ethnic clashes and bomb attacks, leading to KFOR, Nato's mission in Kosovo, stepping

up patrols and checkpoints.

Stojkovic believes that it is difficult to envisage Serbs in the north voting while their representatives were under attack.

"I don't see anyone being interested to vote and no one is interested in fixing this situation," he added.

But the situation is more stable and conducive for voting in other areas of Kosovo.

"All I can say is that the election atmosphere in Gracanica is better than the last elections," Bojan Todorovic, advisor to the Gracanica mayor Bojan Stojanovic told Prishtina Insight, referring to 2009 local election in which Mr Stojanovic was elected.

He said that people there are keen to use their right to vote and elect their representatives in Kosovo.

Another Serb party, the United Serb List, is also certified to take part in December's parliamentary elections.

Its leader Sreten Ivanovic said that his party comprises individuals, NGOs and smaller parties who want to find a solution to the problems of the Serb community through Kosovo's institutions.

He added that the coming elections are important for the Serb community because they should use their right to elect people who will represent them.

"Serb representatives will not lose anything if they are inside Kosovo's government. On the contrary, they will benefit a lot," Ivanovic told Prishtina Insight.

Ivanovic said the Serbian government is not inviting the Serb community to take part but he believes that there will, nonetheless, be a large turnout of Kosovo Serbs in eastern and central areas.

"There are individuals in the list whose parties are based in Serbia, and still want to solve issues inside Kosovo's institutions for their people," Ivanovic said.

Marketing

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Serbia Risks Starting Kosovo Talks 'Empty-handed'

While Belgrade claims it is ready for long-expected discussion with Prishtina, Serbia has yet to reveal its strategy – and many fear it doesn't have one.



By Bojana Barlovac
Belgrade

In the run-up to long-expected talks between Kosovo and Serbia, concern is growing in Belgrade that the country may go into the discussions with no clear agenda in place.

The government's strategy for the talks has yet to be defined or made public, a negotiation team is not in place and no one appears to know what will be on the table.

Serbian officials need to stop repeating that they want talks to start and work instead on developing their strategy, Dusan Janjic, Belgrade political analyst, told Prishtina Insight.

For their part, Belgrade officials insist that Serbia is ready - while remaining coy about the details of their strategy.

Following pressure from the European Union, Serbia toned down the text of its planned draft resolution on Kosovo, which declared independence in 2008, which was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in September.

As a reward for this gesture of cooperation, Serbia's application for EU candidate status was forwarded to the European Commission.

Brussels has been pushing for talks to start between Belgrade and Prishtina ever since – the EU having made it clear that it will not accept any new members

which have outstanding territorial disputes or conflicts with their neighbours.

Addressing the UN Security Council on November 12, Serbia's Foreign Minister, Vuk Jeremic, called for dialogue with Kosovo to start as the only way to achieve "a peaceful European future for the Western Balkans".

Milivoje Mihajlovic, head of the government's information bureau, also insists that Belgrade "wants talks to start as soon as possible and to result in the reconciliation of the two sides".

But he declined to clarify whether Serbia's agenda for the talks was in place, whether a negotiation team had been agreed and what topics might be up for discussion.

Mihajlovic said only that talks needed to start with less controversial general issues that led on to more specific topics. "It is important for the talks to start soon, regardless of the topic," he said.

The only known expert named thus far as part of Serbia's team is Veljko Odalovic, head of the Serbian Commission for Missing Persons.

Washington-based analyst Obrad Kesic fears Belgrade is far from ready for discussions and says it needs to make up its mind about what outcome it wants.

Belgrade needs to decide whether its goal in the talks is to continue to defend its claim to territorial integrity and sovereignty over the whole of Kosovo, or, as many suspect, to negotiate on partition, with Serbia taking the Serb-controlled northern sliver of

Kosovo, north of the town of Mitrovica.

While Serbia ponders its agenda behind closed doors, analysts note that Serbia holds a few strong cards.

Kesic says the support that Serbia currently enjoys in the corridors of Brussels at the moment constitutes one of Belgrade's main advantages.

He also believes that Prishtina needs an agreement with Belgrade more than Serbia needs an agreement with Kosovo, mainly because Kosovo faces severe economic problems that it cannot overcome without Serbian assistance.

Ever since Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, Serbia has blocked its membership of international institutions, such as CEFTA, the Central European free-trade zone.

Kosovo also cannot export goods through Serbia or develop much in the way of economic cooperation in the region while the stalemate continues with Serbia.

Meanwhile, Kosovo's feeble economy is saddled with the high cost of the country's biggest ever infrastructural project - construction of a major highway between Albania and Kosovo, which is estimated will cost about a billion US dollars, or approximately 750 million euro.

Kosovo is also in the midst of political turmoil following the recent resignation of President Fatmir Sejdiu, after the constitutional court ruled that he broke the law by remaining leader of a political party as well as head of state.

Parliament then passed a



Does Tadic have a plan for Kosovo?

vote of no-confidence in the government of Hashim Thaci, paving the way for snap elections scheduled for December 12.

Predrag Simic, Professor of International Relations at Belgrade University, believes that Prishtina is no more prepared for negotiations than is Belgrade. "Prishtina is only buying time," he told Prishtina Insight, adding that Kosovo Albanians do not enjoy the same level of support from the West as they once did.

The date for the talks is supposed to be agreed between three sides: Belgrade, Prishtina and Brussels.

But while Belgrade and Prishtina remain far apart, and while Kosovo is in the throes of an election campaign, most experts believe dialogue is unlikely to begin this year.

Dusan Janjic says the EU Foreign Policy Chief, Catherine Ashton, is making a mistake in pushing for talks to start when it is clear they cannot begin for months.

"First we have elections in Kosovo, then the formation of a new government, then there will be the first 100 days of the new government," he said.

"This is going to postpone the start of the talks for months," Janjic told Prishtina Insight.

Quote of the Fortnight

British Prime Minister David Cameron made this cryptic comment mocking the post of 'Ambassador to Prishtina' last week at the Spectator magazine's politician of the year awards. It comes, perhaps, in response to an earlier comment by badly coiffed Boris Johnson – Mayor of London, political maverick and former editor of the Spectator – about fighting off 'Kosovo-style cleansing' in the UK's capital. Johnson was referring to Cameron's cuts to social housing which will lead to thousands of people being moved out of London to cheaper areas.

"I think the great thing about the Spectator is your extraordinary heritage, the remarkable figures who've sat in the editor's chair. I'm thinking of people like Iain Macleod, Nigel Lawson and obviously not forgetting my own particular favourite. We went to the same school, the same university and of course I've got a soft spot for him. A man of high intelligence and huge ambition...An irresistible charmer with an enviable head of hair... Always bursting with brilliant turns of phrase and bright ideas...Yes, my kind of political maverick... Ian Gilmour.

"I'm not quite sure what went wrong for Ian. I suppose he rubbed the Prime Minister up the wrong way and never really recovered. Shit happens. Anyway, there's always the chance of becoming our ambassador in Prishtina I suppose."



UK Prime Minister David Cameron

Kosovo: Blood Testing to Begin for Roma Lead Camp Children

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in the Osterode settlement in Mitrovica, most of whom spent their childhood living near an old lead mine, will soon have their blood tested for lead contamination.



By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo's Ministry of Health signed an agreement on Tuesday with health authorities in Mitrovica that will monitor and regulate the treatment of children in the Osterode settlement with high levels of lead in their bloodstream.

"This service is first of all for the most vulnerable community- the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian, RAE, community- whose children have faced exclusion from the health system for a long time," Ilir Tolaj, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Health, said in Mitrovica on Tuesday.

Most of the Osterode residents were recently moved to the site after

the informal settlement of Cesmin Lug near the Trepca lead mine was closed on October 1.

Hundreds of RAE families have lived for ten years in Cesmin Lug, an area that was never cleaned up and which is still extremely contaminated with the heavy metal.

Dozens of cases of settlement res-

idents contracting lead poisoning have been reported over the years.

The head of Mercy Corps in Kosovo, Iveta Ouvry, said that the organisation will be in charge of the first phase of the project, which is blood tests.

"Then we will continue with the therapy depending on the level of the

blood contamination," Ouvry told Prishtina Insight.

Ouvry said that the leaders of the Roma families have been waiting some time for the tests, which mark a significant step forward for them.

Lead contamination is toxic to many body organs and tissues including the heart, bones, intestines, kidneys, and the reproductive and nervous systems.

Human rights and health groups long expressed concern about the level of pollution in Cesmin Lug, one of the three camps opened by the UNHCR in 1999 to house hundreds of Roma refugees.

After the camps were officially closed in October, the remaining inhabitants were resettled in Osterode, a nearby refugee camp which is considered to be safer, and others in Roma Mahala, a district in Mitrovica.



Roma children will begin to receive health checks for lead poisoning

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Artemije Defrocked After Defying Serbian Church in Kosovo



By Bojana Barlovac

Retired Bishop Artemije, alongside 50 monks, took over a monastery in northern Kosovo last Friday and served liturgy, defying the decision of the Synod of Serbia's powerful Orthodox church to prohibit him from performing his priestly duties.

Artemije held the mass a day after the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) appointed Bishop Teodosije as its new leader in Kosovo, replacing Artemije, who was forced to retire in May after several close associates were found guilty of embezzlement.

On Friday, about 50 monks and supporters took over Duboki Potok monastery, near Zubin Potok, to attend the mass. They also attempted to take control over a monastery in Zvečan.

As a result, the Serbian Orthodox Church then stripped the former Kosovo bishop of his ranks in what it described as "a hard and painful decision".

The church statement said police detained at least two of Artemije's supporters outside the Crna Reka monastery in southern Serbia, close to Kosovo.

Artemije is considered to be a nationalist hard-liner, fiercely

critical of the international community's actions in Kosovo, which most Serbs regard as an integral part of their country and whose independence they do not recognise.

He has refused to accept the church's decision, claiming that it is not canonical.

The retired bishop addressed those in attendance following the service in Kosovo:

"We are gathered here to lay a new foundation, to bring back order, peace and unity into the Raska-Prizren Eparchy.

"We have not separated from anyone, we are no schismatics, and we are not creating anything new. We are simply striving to maintain what our glorious forefathers and ancestors have left us," said Artemije.

Moderate Chosen as Serbian Bishop in Kosovo

The Synod of the Orthodox Church appointed a more conciliatory figure to head the Raska-Prizren diocese than his predecessor on November 19.

The Synod of Serbia's powerful Orthodox Church has appointed a peace-maker as its new bishop in Kosovo, a religious analyst told Prishtina Insight.

"Teodosije's election to head the Raska-Prizren diocese suggested that the Church intended to start adopting "a softer tone towards the international com-



Artemije and rebel monks have been busy taking over monasteries in Kosovo's north

munity in Kosovo," Zivica Tucic said.

The Church has been seen as pursuing a more open course since Bishop Irinej of Nis was elected 45th Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church on January 22.

Bishop Artemije and Bishop Irinej had been in conflict over whether the Church should cooperate over the reconstruction of monasteries and churches in

Kosovo with the international community. Many were damaged or destroyed when members of Kosovo's Albanian majority staged anti-Serbian riots in 2004.

A Church source told Prishtina Insight that Teodosije was viewed as more flexible on the subject of working with the international community. He also enjoys the support of many Kosovo Serbs.

"He has been travelling around

Kosovo, bringing humanitarian aid to people," the same source said.

The Serbian Orthodox Church has yet to decide on Artemije's ultimate fate, having suspended him from his duties. Tucic said the Synod would either allow him to remain a retired bishop, or formally defrock him. "No one can tell what the 40 members of the assembly will agree on," he said.

Scepticism Over Kosovo Teachers' Salary Hike

Kosovo's outgoing prime minister, Hashim Thaci, has promised the country's teachers a 50-per-cent pay rise, but it remains unclear how it is going to be paid for.



By Petrit Collaku

Hashim Thaci's announcement, which will cost 40 million euro to meet, and comes weeks before the December 12 general election, met puzzlement and scorn in some quarters, with experts asking where the cash-strapped country will find the extra money.

The government's mid-term budget for 2011 to 2013 lists the total grant for education in 2011 at about 110 million euro. The yearly bill for primary and secondary school teachers, which is paid for by municipalities, including principals, is around 80 million euro.

Some 40 million euro would therefore need to be reallocated from elsewhere in the budget to meet Thaci's pledge, which would increase the average wage for a teacher in Kosovo from 250 to 375 euro.

According to a statement on the Ministry of Education's website, the Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, said that the agreed grants to the

municipalities for 2011 would cover the cost of the increase in salaries.

But the minister's advisor, Nehat Mustafa, told Prishtina Insight that the government would allocate another 20 million to meet the promise.

"This decision will not affect the already specified grants for the municipalities for the coming year. The money [for teachers] will come from the government," Mustafa said. "There will be as much money as is needed to fulfill the obligation."

Mustafa would not say whether the IMF, which has agreed to the budget, opening the door to tens of millions of euros in aid, would agree to the changes.

"The IMF had reservations in 2008, when the government decided to increase salaries, but after reviewing our request and finding it reasonable, they agreed," Mustafa recalled.

He said the government had analysed the situation before making the decision. "The government has fulfilled every promise it has made," he added.

However, a Prishtina-based think tank, GAP, which monitors



Teachers have been promised a 50 per cent pay rise, but can Kosovo afford it?

government decisions, said the authorities had no right to make such a decision because parliament had been dissolved in the meantime.

Agron Demi, head of GAP, said that in 2008, when the government awarded an additional 44 euro a

month to health staff working night shifts, municipalities had struggled to find the money.

Demi noted that the government had already approved the mid-term expenditure framework twice, for the last time in June 2010. "Not respecting the frame-

work means breaking the agreement with the IMF," he said.

An opposition party, Fryma e Re, described the announcement as no more than an election trick. They called on the public "not to be fooled by promises that would later be impossible to meet."



News in brief

Delays Risk Kosovo's \$20 Million World Bank Aid

The Parliament of Kosovo's failure to agree to a 20 million dollar aid package from the World Bank means time is running on the deal



By Lavdim Hamidi

The World Bank has told Prishtina Insight that Kosovo's parliament should ratify its \$20million, or 15 million euro, package soon, or risk losing it.

The funds, agreed earlier this year by the Bank's board, include \$12million to modernise the outdated land registry system in Kosovo and a further \$12million, nearly 9 million euro, for bringing other areas of the public sector up to date.

Despite a number of discussions in parliament on the issue, the funds, which include a \$9million, 6.75 million euro, grant and \$11million, or 8.25 million euro, soft loan, was not approved by parliament, which

was dissolved earlier this month ahead of December's elections. It could be a number of months now before the new government is formed.

Laura Kullenberg, senior operations officer at the World Bank Kosovo Office, told Prishtina Insight that countries have a maximum of 18 months from when the deal is approved to ratify the funds. In Kosovo's case this happened in February 2009.

She said: "In many member countries, including Kosovo, financial agreements for World Bank credit-funded operations must, by law, be approved by national parliaments.

"Since Kosovo became a member of the World Bank in June 2009, the Bank's Board of Directors has approved three operations: two investment operations - Real Estate and Cadastre Registration Project (RECAP) and the Public Sector

Modernization Project (PSMP) - and one budget support operation (SEDPP).

"The Bank hopes these operations are ratified by parliament as soon as possible, so the country can begin to receive the resources and benefits provided by those operations.

"If the Bank operations are not ratified within a certain time period the country risks losing the funds."

Muharrem Shahini, spokesman for the Ministry of Economy and Finance, told Prishtina Insight that the funds will be approved at the most appropriate time.

"We believe that the loan from the World Bank will be approved by Kosovo's Parliament when the institution sees it as an appropriate moment," he said. "There is no reason that the loan will not to be approved, because it is in the citizens' interest."

Officials from the Ministry

of Economy and Finance said that land registry has a huge need for financial investment, which will lead to an improvement in the business environment.

"This funding will accelerate development and will improve the business environment," said Shahini.

Haki Shatri, former Minister of Economy and Finance and an assembly member for the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, said while he supported funds for the cadastral office, he was against investing money in 'public sector modernisation' as it could disappear into the government's accounts.

Muhamet Mustafa, head of the college Riinvest Institute, said the Ministry of Economy and Finance was to blame as they had not explained to parliamentarians properly the importance of the grant.

Businesses Slam Maternity Leave Extension

A new labour law, one of the last pieces of legislation to be passed by parliament before it was dissolved last month, has angered the Kosovo business community after it extended maternity leave from four months to a year



By Lavdim Hamidi

Private employers are complaining that the extension of maternity leave from four months to a year will place too heavy a burden on businesses.

Kosovo Chamber of Commerce has warned that because of the financial impact of the new Labour Law, firms will attempt to ignore the new ruling which will prove difficult to implement.

Berat Rukiqi of the chamber, which represents employers in the dialogue between the government and trade unions, said: "The labour law is too restrictive as it contains provisions which are difficult to implement."

He added that a one-year maternity leave will impose too much of a financial burden on the private sector.

Rukiqi believes the legislation should have offered 3 months leave paid for by the employer and another 3 months by the government. Under the new law, firms are obliged to pay for six months leave at 70 per cent of the person's wage, the next three months are government-backed at 50 per cent of the average salary in Kosovo and the final quarter is unpaid.

KCC said it feared women would be discriminated against at job applications, especially because there will be insufficient recourse against firms who do this.

Haxhi Arifi, head of the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo, BSPK, said that the public and the private sector should already be working to implement this law, which comes into force on January 1, but admits that this will prove difficult, especially among small firms.

"The law has been drafted based on international standards; therefore, it should be supported by everyone," said Arifi.

To ensure implementation, BSPK

has called for an increase in the number of workforce inspectors.

Fadil Rraci, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, told Prishtina Insight that Kosovo needed this law, while conceding that maternity leave and other paid leave will be the most difficult to enforce.

But he said that despite the objections from the private sector, all will be obliged to fully implement this law.

"Throughout Kosovo, there are 60 to 65 labour inspectors, but this number will increase over the next year," said Rraci.

He added that penalties will be imposed by the ministry if the law is ignored and that employees also have the right to make claims through the courts.

Individuals can be fined between 100 and 10,000 euro.

Apart from the mother, fathers can also benefit from paternity leave if the mother passes away or abandons the baby before the end of her maternity leave.

Kosovo Water in EU markets

The Kosovo firm Compact Group has its natural water Dea on sale across the EU, as well as the Arab world and Asian countries, it has emerged.

The CEO Mustafe Shala said that the success is based on the quality of the product.

"We have additional requests for export to EU countries, but we are currently increasing our capacities and will continue to export even more in the future," he added.

Company Compact Group currently employs over 160 people.

PTK Profits Up

Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo, PTK, said that during the first 10 months of 2010 the company's revenues increased by 7 per cent.

CEO Shyqri Haxha said that the number of customers of mobile operator Vala, which is part of PTK, is now 1.2 million, while he expects the number of customers to grow to 1.5 million.

Haxha also said that within a short time the mobile operator "Plus" will start its work in Albania, where PTK is shareholder.

PTK is the only public operator of mobile telephony in Kosovo and is in the process of being privatised.

New shopping mall offers 100 global brands

A new shopping centre has been opened in Prishtina offering more than 100 global brands.

The Albi Mall was opened by the outgoing Minister of Economy and Finance and the Mayor of Prishtina.

Betim Humolli, director of Development at Albi Group, has announced that the centre has 33,000 square meters and has created a total of 1,000 new jobs.

Marketing



The center for learning the Albanian Language

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Salford to Sell Serbian FMCG Brands

Salford Capital Partners water and confectionery businesses are likely to go on sale at knockdown price, but the assets could prove to be a good buy in the longer term, analysts predict.



By Vera Ovanin
Belgrade

UK-based investment fund Salford Capital Partners said last week it was considering the sale of its Serbian confectionery maker Bambi-Banat. The company recently estimated that the market would grow by no more than 2 per cent this year, local media quoted CEO Miroslav Miletic as saying last week.

The head of the fund in Serbia, Slobodan Petrovic, said he expected that Salford would put the company on the market next year.

"...We have no buyers at present. We will try to see this through but much will depend on company results this year and the market in general. We expect that the offers will come from foreign companies and large confectionery players, or large foreign investment funds," Petrovic added.

Belgrade-based media have quoted Petrovic as saying earlier that the fund's equity holdings in its four listed companies in Serbia – dairy producers Imlek and Subotica, water bottler Knjaz Milos and Bambi-Banat, will be sold by 2012 at the latest.

As for Serbia's bottled water market, the sales volume contracted by almost 2 per cent to 4.86 million hectolitres in the first nine months of 2010, Belgrade-based news daily Politika quoted the head broker of Sinteza Advisory, Nenad Gujanicic, as saying last week. In September alone, the market contracted by 10 per cent

year on year, he added.

According to general manager of water bottler Aqua Gala, part of Delta Agrar's Mioni, the driving factor behind the industry's droop is the market's cheaper competitor – tap water.

"The biggest reason is a very simple and obvious one. Consumers have a cheaper alternative, which is the water from the municipal water system. Bottled water is among the first items that people are willing to cut back on in times of crisis," Sasa Micic said.

"Still, I don't expect this year to be as bad as 2009, and I don't expect next year to be as bad as this," Micic said.

He added that the current trend of consumers switching from carbonated to non-carbonated water is likely to persist.

"About six years ago the sales ratio of carbonated to non-carbonated water was 80-20. Today's it is about 65-35.

The main reason [for the long term growth of bottled water sales] is a growing perception that bottled water is healthier than tap water. People are increasingly shifting towards healthier habits," he explained.

So, why would anyone seek to invest in a slumped sector?

Zoran Grubacic, head of Beo

to locally produced wheat, milk, margarine and other raw materials that are cheaper than their counterparts elsewhere in the



Monet brokerage, says the Salford assets are likely to be sold on the cheap as an upshot of the financial downturn but that entry into the Serbian market for a new player would pay dividends later.

In a recent interview to Sofia-based news wire SeeNews, Grubacic said the food industry in Serbia has "top-notch potential," was operating "on a very high level...is a profit-maker and has large export operations."

Serbian food companies are likely acquisition targets because of the access they can provide to third markets like Russia, Grubacic said.

"Bambi-Banat won't be able to fetch the kind of price it would have fetched two or three years ago. But a buyer would have access

region,"

Grubacic told Prishtina Insight, adding that potential buyers could include Pepsi and Croatia's Kras.

"If the dinar continues to slide against the euro, the appetite [for the Salford assets] will only grow because of their export potential," he explained.

Serbia's confectionery industry, which has an annual output of about 500 million euro, grew at an annual rate of around 7 per cent between 2001 and 2007 before stagnating in 2008 and sliding back in 2009, news provider EMportal quoted Miletic as saying last week. Retrenchment continued in the first half of 2010 but Miletic said he expected a turnaround in the



second half.

The combined market value of confectionery producers across the country is no less than 1.0 billion euro, Miletic said.

The general manager of market research company GfK Serbia, Marijana Agic Molnar, says both industries will start to recover as the living standard of Serbian citizens improves.

"A drop in living standards rules out impulse purchases, which for many includes confectionery items. What we have found in our research is that many people have gone back to making confectionery items at home because it is a cheaper alternative.

"The bottled water industry has posted an even steeper fall than the confectionery because of the availability of a substitute product – tap water."

The Knjaz Milos brand has a 40 per cent share of the mineral water market in Serbia, with its Aqua Viva brand holding a share of 18-19 percent of the market of bottled spring water. Bambi-Banat's market share in the biscuit category in Serbia is roughly 25 per cent, Petrovic said.

Bulgaria Urged to Keep Faith In Euro

Economists say the country will benefit in the long term from joining the single currency, whatever the current worries over the troubles in Ireland and Greece.



By Boryana
Dzhambazova in Sofia

Leading economists in Bulgaria say the ongoing crisis in the country – and in the euro-zone – should not dissuade Sofia from aiming to enter the single currency, a move they believe will ultimately benefit the economy.

Fears about the stability of the EU's single-currency zone are growing, centered on the worsening climate in hugely indebted Ireland and Greece.

But Bulgarian economists are convinced that the euro-zone will recover and prosper in the long term. "Twenty years after it adopts the euro, Bulgaria's GDP will be 15 to 20 per cent higher than it is today, by attracting more

investment and more intensive trade," Georgi Ganev, an economist with the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, said.

Ganev said he was convinced that the current problems in the euro-zone will be over long before Bulgaria joins the single currency, which will be in several years' time at the earliest.

Lachezar Bogdanov, another economist, also sees euro-zone membership as the best option for the future. As the national currency, the lev, is already pegged to the euro, it remains highly vulnerable to problems afflicting the euro-zone anyway, he noted.

"It would be better to be part of the euro-zone and enjoy some of its benefits and take part in the decision-making process," he told Prishtina Insight.

On Wednesday, the Finance Minister, Simeon Dyankov, told Reuters that the country was determined to apply for ERM II, a

so-called "waiting room" for the euro-zone, by as soon as the second half of 2011, when the government plans to meet the EU's requirement to bring budget deficits under 3 per cent of GDP.

Bulgaria's economy is still struggling to find its way out of financial crisis. In a faint sign of recovery, for the first time in 18 months, the economy grew by 0.2 per cent for the third quarter of this year, compared to the same period in 2009.

Earlier this year, Bulgaria, which joined the EU in 2007, was forced to abandon plans to apply for ERM II after it was revealed that it had hidden a deficit of over 3 per cent of GDP for the previous year.

The government expects to cut the 2011 deficit to 2.5 per cent and hopes the economy will expand by 3.6 per cent that year. Some economists dismiss these plans as too optimistic.



Prishtina Airport to Bear Name of KLA Fighter



Move to rename Prishtina airport after controversial ethnic Albanian commander Adem Jashari criticised as attack on country's multi-ethnic nature.



By Petrit Collaku

The decision to name Kosovo's main airport after a Kosovo Liberation Army commander killed by Serbian forces has drawn criticism for undermining the multiethnic nature of Kosovo, enshrined in its constitution.

The legality of the move has also been questioned, as it came three days after the government lost a motion of no-confidence.

Kosovo Albanians see Adem Jashari as a hero of the country's war against Serbian rule. A commander of KLA operations in the Drenica area, he took part in a number of attacks on Serbian forces before he was killed in March 1998, along with 50 others, when Yugoslav forces laid siege to his family home in Prekaz, now the site of a museum and a KLA shrine.

Airport chief executive Agron Mustafa told Prishtina Insight that they were pressing on with plans to change the name of the airport to "Adem Jashari Airport", despite concerns.

The International Civilian Office, ICO, which is the guardian of the "Ahtisaari package", the deal that led to Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence and which guarantees the multi-ethnicity of the country, made an oblique criticism of the decision

when contacted by Prishtina Insight.

Spokesman Kai Mueller-Berner said that naming the airport was up to the government, but added: "Given its mandate, the ICO wants to see decisions and actions that recognise the multi-ethnic character of the Republic of Kosovo."

Igor Savic, head of a civil society organisation working with the Kosovo Serb community, said the decision could cause long-lasting damage to already fragile relationships between Serbs and Albanians.

"I would have expected it to be named after a well-known scientist or a humanist," said Savic, head of "Future without Fear". He said such decisions recalled the Yugoslav era, when airports or hospitals were routinely named after fighters.

The Prishtina-based think tank, GAP, said the government could not take such a decision, having already lost a vote of no confidence on November 2. Kosovo was now in "a legal limbo that should be covered by the government's rules of procedure", GAP said.

The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Nenad Rasic, a Serb, admitted being present at the cabinet meeting when the decision was made on November 5, but said he thought it was simply a suggestion as no vote was taken.

"I didn't have comments that day because I thought this was just a suggestion by the government," Rasic told Prishtina Insight. "Had we been asked to vote, I would have abstained,"



Adem Jashari, now a cult figure

he added.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Hajredin Kuci, defended the decision. "This proposition of the [airport] board has the consent of the government," he said.

The Kosovo government has already renamed the new 700 million-euro highway, linking the Serbian and Albanian borders, after Kosovo's first president, Ibrahim Rugova. Kuci added: "I believe these two very important decisions will be welcomed by citizens."

'Bill Clinton' Reopens, Finally

One of Prishtina's most used thoroughfares has reopened after a 3million euro facelift.

Bill Clinton Boulevard, home to the famous statue of the former US president, has been closed for almost half a year, causing traffic chaos and leaving shopkeepers and taxi drivers furious at their falling income.

Last week, Mayor of Prishtina Isa Mustafa reopened the road, including an underground pass, the first of its kind in the capital.

"With the expansion of the boulevard from four to six lanes, we have established a very important corridor into Prishtina for vehicles coming from Peja and Mitrovica," said Mustafa.

"This road has been overloaded, especially around crowded pedestrian crossings, so we have also built an underpass with a small shopping centre and other associated items, like lifts, public toilets, etcetera."

Markings and traffic light will be added to the boulevard soon, he added.



Mayor Mustafa opens the newly renovated road

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Nina Schat

of the Netherlands



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

Well, I was quite surprised to see the water that was running from my tap was fluorescent blue! The number of barnatores is also pretty impressive.

What's your favorite hangout?

I recently discovered N'shpi, just around the corner from where I live; the atmosphere is very pleasant, especially when you are sitting close to the woodstove, and the waiters are charming. Besides that, I hang out in the usual suspects: dit e nat for coffee, tingell or traffic for raki, and creme for the late nights. And not to forget the cafe in Pandora tower, the only rotating bar in town!

Do you do anything cultural?

Erm. Does watching films count too? I intensely miss a cinema where they show some quality films on a regular basis. I tend to visit the concerts and festivals that are on offer, but I am not a regular in the exhibition spaces.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

I must say I don't get annoyed that easily, although these clicking balls that seem to be the latest hot item among children usually arouse some agitation. Besides that, my noisy neighbours and these enormous uncovered holes in the sidewalk could be labelled as annoying.

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

Probably not the most original issue, but I would definitely make a proper plan for road construction work. Apart from the aesthetic argument, it doesn't really help when all the main junctions are under construction at the exact same time, and driving from A to be B becomes more or less impossible.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

As caffeine has quite a strong effect on me, I tend to have just one or two; one to wake me up in the morning and sometimes one after lunch. Weekends show an irregular coffee pattern; it then depends on how much time I spend sitting around in coffee bars.

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Although not typical Kosovar, but more of a regional product, I have to say ajvar. It is my absolute favourite, I combine it with practically everything. And managed to make my friends back home addicted to it as well. I also love the Gjakova bread that is served at restaurant Pishat.

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

Pandora tower.

Macedonia Arrest Leaves Albanian Opposition Red-Faced



Latest revelations in the so-called 'spy files' affair are likely to boost the political ascendancy among Macedonian Albanians of the governing Democratic Union for Integration, DUI.



By Sinisa Jakov Marusic

Macedonia's Albanian political scene was in turmoil after police on Tuesday said they had arrested a former senior officer, Hisen Musliu, suspected of fabricating secret police files naming leaders of the ruling Democratic Union of Integration, DUI, as spies.

The DUI is the largest ethnic Albanian party in Macedonia and is a junior partner in government with the centre-right VMRO-DPMNE of Nikola Gruevski.

But what caused consternation among Albanians, one-quarter of the country's population, were police claims that Musliu had confessed to working for the DUI's bitter rival, the smaller Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA.

"This will strengthen the DUI's domination [of the Macedonian Albanian bloc] as it portrays them as victims of a political set-up,"

Marko Trosanovski, a communications and marketing expert from the Institute for Democracy think tank, said.

Police said that the incriminating material found at Musliu's home included four alleged secret police dossiers naming DUI leaders, including party head Ali Ahmeti, as former Yugoslav and Serbian spies in the 1980s and 1990s.

"After this, the DUI can count on strengthening its already high level of support among [Macedonian] Albanians, although this will not necessarily attract sympathy votes from the general public," Trosanovski added.

He believes some members of the public will probably suspect that the DUI used its position in power to lean on the police.

Macedonia's "spy files" affair erupted last month after anonymous persons handed in four dossiers to the country's Lustration Commission, a body tasked with purifying the public administration of former communist spies.

The DUI immediately suspected that the affair was of the DPA's making, while the Commission refused to probe the four files, arguing that they were photocopies and that they needed the originals in order to launch an investigation.

Imer Ismaili, a political science professor at the University of South-Eastern Europe, based in Tetovo, western Macedonia, said the police action had left the DPA red-faced.

"The DPA leadership has acted irresponsibly and this shows them in a very bad light, pulling dirty tricks to discredit their political opponents," he told Prishtina Insight.

But Trosanovski predicts that the DPA will hold on to its core supporters who will feel reassured by the claims of party leaders, flatly denying the police's claims.

Recent opinion polls show the DUI enjoys the support of about 9 per cent of voters, more than double the support that the DPA enjoys. Ali Ahmeti remains by far the most popular politician in the Albanian bloc.

New Proposal to End Political Standoff in Albania

Albanian's Socialist opposition leader offers a proposal to end the spat over the 2009 parliamentary elections in a letter to the prime minister, as the country risks its European future over the dispute.



By Besar Likmeta

In the letter, published on Tuesday, Edi Rama drops the opposition's long-standing request for a recount of ballots, but seeks to gain access to electoral materials such as vote tallies, voter signatures and electoral lists in order to push forward an investigation.

"This offer is based on the resolution of the European Parliament ... to immediately create a [parliamentary] investigative commission, headed by an opposition member and with an opposition majority, with a full mandate to investigate the electoral materials without including the ballots," writes Rama.

Prime Minister Sali Berisha has not presented an opinion on the proposal but has requested that the Socialists file it officially in parliament.

For more than a year the Socialists have requested a ballot recount of the June 2009 elections –narrowly won by Berisha's Democratic Party-led coalition – arguing that they were marred by

fraud.

Berisha's Democrats maintain the polls are the best elections the country has ever held and a recount is impossible because the opposition has exhausted all legal appeals.

Rama explained in the letter that the new offer comes as an attempt to safeguard the country's interests in its European integration agenda.

On November 9, the European Commission published a negative opinion of Albania's bid for EU candidate status, citing the prolonged political crisis as one of the main reasons.

The proposal is the latest development of a political drama that has blocked the country's reforms toward its EU integration path, incited street protests and witnessed a 21-day hunger strike by opposition MPs.

Previous attempts at resolving the crisis, spearheaded in turn by President Bamir Topi, the Council of Europe and the

European Parliament, have failed and local observers warn that there is no guarantee that latest opposition proposal will be accepted by the majority.

Political analyst Lutfi Dervishi, notes that both the socialists and the democrats, Albania's main political powerhouses for nearly two decades, have "a complete mistrust of each other, which borders on paranoia," and makes

it very difficult to

find a compromise.

"Albania's political class is detached from reality and [political] calculations are made within a small group of people who represent clan interests rather than those of the public."



Croatia's once infamous 'seagulls', men who 'entertained'

female tourists in exchange for gifts, appear to have resurfaced as professional, heterosexual male prostitutes whose clients include locals and visitors alike.



By Barbara Matejcic,
Zagreb, Split
and Opatija, Croatia

"You know, it wouldn't be a half-bad idea for us to meet on the beach, so you can get a better idea of what I look like", says the deep, masculine voice on the other end of the phone.

"You'll recognise me easily; I'm tall, moderately muscled, with short brown hair. I'll be in a tight white T-shirt."

I have yet to set eyes on 27-year-old Mario, but I already know more private things about him than I do about my closest friends. I know his measurements and that the only things he does not consent to sexually are sadomasochist or homosexual acts. Everything else is a go.

Mario slowly approaches a hotel beach in Opatija, a quaint tourist town on the northern end of Croatia's Adriatic coast, all the while casting glances at bathers, who are few and far between as autumn begins to take hold.

We shake hands, as befits any business meeting, and a few minutes later he is showing me nude pictures of himself over coffee. That is the way it goes in this trade; you meet a person and the next moment you see him in all his glory.

Mario is a male prostitute. A gigolo, he corrects me. A semi-professional version of the once-famous Yugoslav "seagulls"; men who "entertained" middle-class female tourists in the summer months in return for a gift or an all-expenses-paid night on the town.

He is one of ten Croat gigolos I met – and many more who I con-

tacted over the phone or via email – while investigating male prostitution in Croatia after stumbling over a website that listed Croatia as one of the top destinations for female sex tourism in Southern Europe.

Patriarchal society

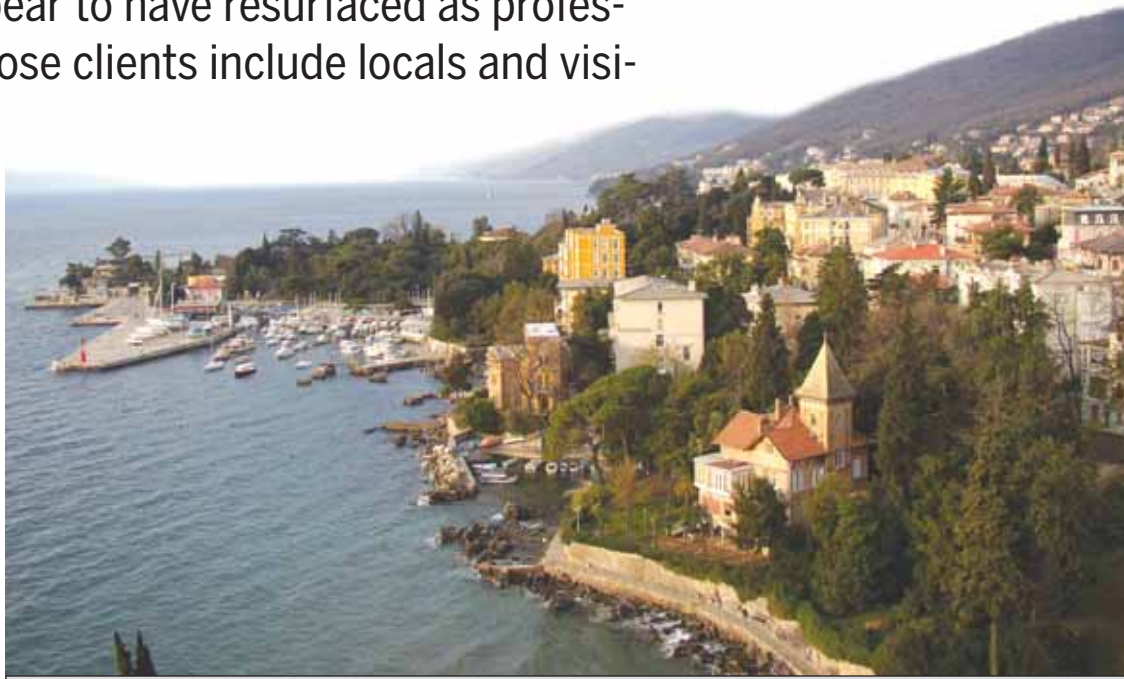
Prostitution is considered very much a female only profession in the Western Balkans, where patriarchal and conservative values dominate. So it was something of a surprise to find male, heterosexual prostitution is a thriving – if largely unorganised – business.

Fifty men offered their services as male prostitutes within just two days of placing an advertisement for gigolos on two Croatian websites. Offers flowed in for weeks from all over the country and beyond, from Istria to Dubrovnik, from Herzegovina, Montenegro and Belgrade.

Most appeared to be serious and provided a detailed price list, photograph, physical description, contact numbers and an explanation of what was on, and off, the menu. They usually drew the line at sadomasochistic sex and acts involving faeces – usually referred to as "doing number two".

A few declined women over 55 years of age and those weighing more than 90 kilos. Only one shied away from married women, reluctant to "tamper with God's law". All sorts are drawn to the trade, small-town students, married men with serious day jobs, tourist guides, young lads who look like skater boys...

Mario's career began in 2007, after meeting a middle-aged Slovenian woman holidaying in



The quaint town of Opatija - a good spot to look for gigolos

Croatia. They spent a few days together and, before she returned home, she left an envelope addressed to him with the hotel reception.

Instead of a farewell letter, the Slovenian woman had left him money. Mario was surprised, but not in the least offended. On the contrary, it dawned on him that this had the makings of his ideal job.

Since then he has set himself up as a part-timer in the sex trade, serving the needs of a few regular clients.

"They are married women in their forties with workaholic husbands who feel neglected. I indulge them, am attentive to their needs, send them tender messages, I listen to them, even though it all goes in one ear and out the other. It's a piece of cake with women," he states confidently.

He says his live-in partner does not have a clue about his second job. "How could she ever suspect? I trained as a boxer for years. I'm a

man's man, I could never be a paid man," he says.

And he is far from being alone in his willingness to work in the sex trade - despite the fact that prostitution is illegal in Croatia. The law defines prostitution as a punishable offence against public order and morality and organised prostitution as a criminal act.

Ivan, 26, and Leo, 27, reach their clientele via an escort agency, which advertises its services under various aliases online. All of the agency's promotional material pertains to female escorts – the fact that men are also on the menu is not disclosed anywhere.

The agency's representative assured me over the telephone, however, that they have male escorts as well. You could hire a male prostitute anywhere in Croatia for 1,000 euro per day. The services of a gigolo in Zagreb cost 200 euro per hour. Half of that goes to the agency owner, half to the gigolo.

Both Ivan and Leo have day jobs – as a model and bodyguard respectively. They became part-time sex workers to help make ends meet. They seem like nice, well-mannered young men with broad smiles to boot. Both look more like the sort of boy who could escort you to a family lunch.

Indeed, something that becomes instantly clear is that liaisons with female tourists are frequently regarded as "holiday romances" rather than sex tourism. The gigolos who meet women's sexual needs also do not seem to attract the same social disapproval as their female counterparts.

When asked what their friends think of their work as escorts, both Leo and Ivan claim they are all envious.

"We have sex with attractive women and get paid for that," sighs Leo, as he reminisces about a "hot" lawyer he visited a couple of months back. He hopes she will

Indictment 'Drafted' Against Serbian Star Ceca



By Pristina Insight

Serbian broadcaster B92 has reported that a draft indictment has been prepared against Serbian turbofolk singer Ceca and her sister for the alleged misappropriation of some 11 million euros from a Belgrade football club.

According to B92, the draft indictment charges Svetlana Raznatovic, known as Ceca, with misappropriating funds from the sale of footballers from the Serbian club Obilic, allegedly with the help of her sister Lidija Velickovic-Ocokoljic.

Ceca was president of Obilic, the club pur-

chased by her late husband and notorious criminal Arkan, from 1998-2003. During that period, she allegedly sold 15 football players to foreign clubs and pocketed part of the earnings from the sales.

The investigation into the case has been ongoing since 2003, but the Serbian prosecutor's office has not yet filed charges, explaining in response to B92 reports of the draft indictment that the probe was continuing but was very complex and would take time to be completed.

The probe was launched after Ceca was arrested during a massive police operation, codenamed Sablja, which was carried out immediately after Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was murdered on March 12, 2003.

Detained on suspicion of illegal weapons

possession and the improper transfer of football players, she spent 121 days in prison and was then released.

She was widely seen in public as a victim of the operation, in which police arrested more than 1,000 people.

She has since enjoyed the support of some local officials in the country, and sang for then Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik at a celebration of the Serbian Orthodox New Year in January 2007. She also sang at a pre-election rally for Dodik in October this year, which was attended by Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic.



Neighbourhood

Croatia's Gigolos

call again. Although, it turns out his services were sought by the lawyer's husband.

Clients 'mostly couples'

Leo and Ivan say it is most often the husbands who request their services for their wives. Both say the husbands often watch or videotape the act, while stressing that homosexual acts are strictly out of the question.

They describe their clients as well-off couples in their thirties and forties who want to spice up their sex lives, try something new or realise a fantasy. Ivan ponders when asked whose fantasy – the man's or the woman's?

"I don't know, actually, I've never given it much thought," he eventually says with a shrug.

Their experience appears to be far from exceptional. Tony has been working as a full-time gigolo for six years now. He works three to four hours every day, except Sunday. "You have to spend one day in the week with your family," he explains.

He says his clients are also mainly couples – between 22 and 55 years of age, he notes with precision. Demand is on the increase, so he has decided to take on someone new. Tony is adamant he is not interested in hiring a fellow gigolo over the age of 27, despite the fact he himself is in his late thirties.

I found Tony's ad – the only one for male escorts – among hundreds of advertisements for sexual services by women in Croatia's main printed Yellow Pages directory. He charges 55 euro per hour, payable after he has satisfied a client's wife.

Thus, it turns out that in Croatia the clients for heterosexual male prostitutes are, in effect, men.

Aleksandar Stulhofer, a professor of sociology at Zagreb University, says it's impossible to fully interpret what is behind this phenomenon.

"I would only speculate that in the situation of a hidden market, such as male sex work, it might be easier for men, for a number of reasons including cultural and financial, to purchase specific services," he says.

Stulhofer rejects the notion that, however, traditional sexual morality would stop women from booking the services of a gigolo themselves.

"Especially among young generations of urban women, research evidence suggests a widespread sexual permissiveness – comparable to levels usually reported in western European countries," he stresses.

Stulhofer also notes that heterosexual male sex workers appear to enjoy a different status to their female counterparts in Croatian public opinion – one that is certainly less stigmatised.

Not one of the gigolos became a sex worker out of poverty and

none thought of it as remotely degrading. Rather, they regard the business as being more American Gigolo than Midnight Cowboy.

Male strippers

Perhaps the most visible part of the heterosexual sex trade is the niche stripping business. Many of these entertainers do more that titillate their audience by stripping off police uniforms – one of the most popular performance costumes, according to strippers I talked to.

Two male strippers – Alen, 29, and Dario, 32, – laugh out loud when questioned about the apparent discrepancy between the fees. The going rate for a 30-minute striptease is 200 euro, while they net 100 euro for an hour of sex.

"Well, you know, striptease requires some kind of knowledge and skill," smirks one.

Croatia's sex industry has an estimated annual turnover of around 42 million euro, according to some NGOs. The police say it is just a rough calculation because earnings are, given that prostitution is an illegal business, unknown.

However, during one criminal investigation the police found out that one escort agency based in Zagreb had earned 206,000 euro in just three months, says police official Zlatko Kostic.

Between 2002 and 2009, the police registered 1,968 people as being involved in prostitution in a country with a population of just 4.5 million. Comparative statistics show similar prostitution rates in neighbouring Balkan countries, according to the police.

Out of the total of 1,968, six were male and only one of them a heterosexual male prostitute. "99 per cent of all sex workers in Croatia are women," explains Kostic.

It is impossible to find research detailing the number of heterosexual male sex workers in Croatia. The few organisations that supply sex workers with condoms, such as Let (Flight) and Help, say they have never come across male sex workers.

They remain very much off health workers' radar, including among doctors who specialise in treating sexually transmitted diseases, STDs.

According to Romance on the Road, a book about female sex tourism written by Jeannette Belliveau, about 600,000 Western women have engaged in sex tourism in the last 25 years – which appears to confirm there is a demand for straight men who offer sexual services exclusively to women.

Among their number is "Stephanie", a 44-year-old businesswoman from Switzerland who regularly visits Croatia for work. She is now on the look-out for a gigolo in Zagreb.

"I heard stories from my mum's generation about fun holidays on

the Adriatic, and I find the local men attractive," she says.

Stephanie works 55-hour weeks on average, and spends at least 10 days a month on the road. She did not get round to marriage, has no children and has long lost the desire to go out and meet men.

Male prostitution 'still taboo'

A few years back she discovered a Swiss brothel run exclusively for women. She now boasts a "steady boyfriend", as she calls him, who visits her once or twice a week.

"Even though prostitution is legal in Switzerland, the society more liberal and women more emancipated, male prostitution is still taboo," she says.

"Some think that women don't have to pay for sex because they can get it for free whenever they feel like it. But how can you, I ask, when Saturday night comes and I'm dead tired from the working week and all I want to do is stay home and relax?" she asks.

"Others think that sex is necessarily tied to emotions when a woman is concerned, thus there being no prospects in being a gigolo. That's where they're most mistaken," chuckles Stephanie.

While the market is still very much in its formative stage in Croatia, gigolos seem poised to make the leap from amateur to professional. They may be ready, but are the women themselves?

According to a number of girlfriends who – half joking, half serious – offered me their help during this investigation, the Croatian seagulls look set to fly again.

Some people's names have been changed in this article.

Sex workers in Europe

- 87% of all European sex workers are women, 7% are male and 6% transgender
- The highest concentration of male sex workers (10%) is in the European South region where Balkan countries belong
- Austria, Finland, Denmark, Estonia and Lithuania report almost exclusively female sex workers
- In highly conservative and deeply religious Poland, 15% of its sex worker population is male
- France, Greece, Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy report a relatively high proportion of transgender sex workers (15% to 25%).

*Source: 2009 report "Sex work in Europe: A mapping of the prostitution scene in 25 European countries" by TAMPEP (European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers)

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New Mosque Plan Catches Albania Muslims Off Guard



By Besar Likmeta

Islamic community is surprised by mayor's sudden announcement that a new mosque will be built in the centre of Tirana.

"The announcement was a bombshell," said Elvis Naci, imam of Tirana's Tabakeve mosque, adding that the council of the Muslim Community had yet to discuss the proposal and express an official position.

Speaking before the Eid celebration, Tirana Mayor Edi Rama said the municipality had a work plan ready to construct the new mosque behind the National Opera.

"The new mosque is needed by the Muslim community, which, like the two other faiths, merits its own house of worship in the centre of the capital," Rama said.

A day later, the Minister of Transportation, Sokol Olldashi, suggested that Rama's announcement was campaign politics, related to upcoming local elections due in May 2011.

Olldashi accused the mayor, who is also leader of the opposition Socialists, of deceiving people. The city centre plan designed by the French Architecture Studio, which the municipality approved, did not include a mosque, he pointed out. "Behind the Opera two towers are planned, which...don't look like minarets," Olldashi noted.

The City Council retorted by saying that the Minister was "only throwing mud at the

mayor."

The request to build a mosque in the centre of Tirana has been a perennial demand of the Muslim community since the fall of the Communist regime in Albania in 1991.

In 1992, the then president, Sali Berisha, laid the first stone of a mosque to be constructed near Namazgja square, close to the parliament. However, construction was never completed after the speaker of parliament, Pjeter Abnori, a Catholic, contested the plans. Abnori said he feared that building a mosque so near parliament would make Albania look like an Islamic republic.

Meanwhile, over the last two decades, a Catholic and an Orthodox cathedral have both been built in the centre with official blessing, prompting Muslims to complain of discrimination.

When the government granted the Orthodox Church public land in 2002 to build a cathedral, former prime minister Pandeli Majko promised that a mosque would also get a go-ahead. But the promise never materialised.

Roughly 70 per cent of Albania's population is Muslim. About 20 per cent are Orthodox Christians and 10 per cent Catholics.

During the Communist era, in 1967, Albania was proclaimed the world's first atheist country. Religion was outlawed and most mosques and churches were demolished or converted into warehouses or youth halls.

The regime often blamed five centuries of Ottoman rule and Islam for the country's economic backwardness, a belief which still lives on in the country's political and cultural elite.



Organ Trade Charges

Allegations that a top doctor ran a kidney-trafficking ring from a village villa threaten to further tar Kosovo's image as an international centre of this horrifying trade.



By Lawrence Marzouk

Kosovo's medical establishment has been rocked by allegations that one of its top doctors was the ringleader of an international organ trafficking gang, which lured desperately poor people to Prishtina to sell their kidneys.

Dr Lutfi Dervishi, a professor in urology at University Clinical College Kosovo, was indicted on October 15 for organ trafficking, alongside eight others – six of whom are Kosovo Albanians.

Interpol arrest warrants have also been issued for a Turkish doctor and an Israeli fixer, who were also part of the ring and are on the run.

Most staffers in Kosovo's poorly paid medical profession have expressed shock at the allegations. But others claim the charges are linked to a separate attempt to smear Kosovo's independence war by claiming that the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, engaged in organ trafficking.

Investigators stumbled on the case on October 31, 2008, when a Turkish national, Yilman Altun, was stopped from boarding a flight home from Prishtina to Turkey because he looked unwell. He had previously been questioned on his arrival about his visit to Kosovo, and his answers had been flagged as suspicious.

When stopped on departure, Altun admitted to police that he had visited Kosovo to donate his kidney on the invitation of the Medicus private medical clinic, based in the village of Uglare. Altun was arrested but was sent to Prishtina hospital for treatment because of his poor health. He later returned to Turkey.

Behind closed doors:

Uglare is an unremarkable, glum place on the plain of Kosovo. A village on the outskirts of Prishtina, just off the main road to the airport, it is a patchwork of newly built houses, fields and factories.

Along a dirt-track road that crisscrosses the village stands a smart building fronted by a well-kept garden.

For at least one year, according to an investigation by the EU rule-

of-law mission in Kosovo, EULEX, the Medicus clinic was the hub of a major international organ-trafficking ring.

According to the indictment, seen by Associated Press, in 2008, the gangsters within preyed on people struggling with "extreme poverty or acute financial distress" from Moldova, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkey, promising money in exchange for their organs.

The gang tempted such 20 victims to its headquarters by promising to pay them up to 15,000 euro each, while organ recipients were required to pay between 80,000 and 100,000 euro. In fact, the victims received nothing.

EULEX is now seeking evidence from authorities in Canada, Germany, Kazakhstan and Turkey, including access to the emails of two suspects on servers in the United States, demonstrating the global spread of the ring.

After the detention of Yilman Atun, Kosovo police along with UN police raided the Medicus clinic on November 4, 2008, arresting Dr Lutfi Dervishi, a renowned urologist, and his son Arban, the clinic manager, on suspicion of performing illegal organ transplants.

According to the Ministry of

Interior, police found out-of-date medicine, blood whose origins could not be determined and an elderly Israeli patient who was suspected of having received Altun's kidney. The 75-year-old, his son and daughter-in-law were arrested but later released.

On November 14, 2008, a Turkish-born Israeli, Moshe Harel, was also arrested in Kosovo. He was suspected of being the fixer for the gang. A UN court, acting days before the EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, took over the case, released Harel, however, ordering him to report back to the police in 60 days' time. Instead, he fled the country. Earlier this month Interpol issued an arrest warrant against him.

The Ministry of Interior named a Turkish surgeon, Yusuf Ercin Sonmez, as another suspect in November 2008. He also fled the country after the raids, without being arrested and is also now the subject on an Interpol arrest warrant.

Following two years of investigations, on October 15 and 20 this year, EULEX lodged two indictments at Prishtina District Court, naming a total of nine people as suspects.

Five Kosovo Albanians were

charged with trafficking in human organs, organised crime and abuse of official authority, including Dr Dervishi, his son Arban and Ilir Rrecaj, a former advisor to the Minister of Health. He was sacked after the scandal broke.

Two other Kosovo Albanian doctors are charged with unlawful medical activities.

None of those charged is in custody.

Prosecutors believe Dr Dervishi started his illegal enterprise after visiting a medical conference in Istanbul in 2006. There, he asked for help in setting up the trafficking ring.

Six months later, prosecutors say, Sonmez, who has been connected to a string of organ-trafficking cases, contacted him. Harel was made responsible for finding potential donors in a host of poor countries, as well as identifying needy recipients of organs in Israel.

Harel was involved in "identifying, recruiting and transporting victims" and in "ensuring the delivery of cash payments by electronic bank transfer" prior to surgery, the indictment says.

According to Interpol, both are wanted for crimes against life and health, for people smuggling, trafficking and illegal immigration.

Sonmez is the subject of several criminal proceedings in other countries for human trafficking and removal of organs, according to the indictment.

Another two doctors, Israeli national Zaki Shapira and a Turkish national, Kenan Demirkol, are identified in the 46-page document as "unindicted co-conspirators".

Sources told Prishtina Insight that they are suspected of involvement in the case but that there is not enough evidence to press charges.

Some shocked, others suspicious:

Ilir Tolaj, the most senior civil servant in the Ministry of Health, said lack of laws was not the problem in the Medicus case, but failure to properly enforce existing laws. The case would make the ministry more vigilant about the problem of organ trafficking, he said.

"Such cases greatly damage the image of our medical staff and place the extraordinary engagement and work of many health professionals who practice under extraordinary [difficult] conditions under a cloud," he said.

"This and similar cases have brought into question the ethics of health professionals and the whole Kosovo society, which is passing through a difficult period of tran-



Lutfi Dervishi (left) following a trip to Germany where he received aid for Prishtina's urological unit

Feature

Rock Kosovo



The Medicus clinic is now closed after police raids

sition and crisis of values," Tolaj added.

Many medical professionals and trainees in Kosovo feel appalled. Mirind Kastrati, 21, medical student at Prishtina University, is one. "I feel sorry for the victims of this clinic," he said. "The government should check all the doctors coming to Kosovo and make sure they are licensed."

But Dr Xhavit Bicaj, a colleague of Dr Dervishi's at the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo, has expressed doubts about the whole case.

He thinks it no accident that the affair emerged not long after Carla Del Ponte, former Chief Prosecutor for the International Tribunal for Crimes in Former Yugoslavia, ICTY, alleged in her April 2008 published memoir that the KLA had been involved in trafficking organs during Kosovo's independence war.

"If someone is doing this just to prove [what it says in] the [Del Ponte] book then this is a betrayal of the health service and of all doctors in Kosovo," he said.

"Someone" was attempting to damage the private health care sector in Kosovo, Bicaj maintained.

From fame to notoriety:

Lutfi Dervishi was one of Kosovo's best-known urologists, travelling the world to medical conferences and acting as Kosovo's international contact for this field of medicine, which specialises in treating kidney and urinary tract illnesses.

Dervishi was active as a urolo-

gist during the Kosovo conflict, according to transcripts from the ICTY. Fadil Bajraktari, a character witness at the 2005 war crimes trial of Fatmir Limaj, now Minister of Transport, told the court that he consulted Dervishi in March 1998 about his kidney stones in his hometown of Kishna Reka, in the Drenas heartland of the KLA.

After the war, Dervishi was a professor at Kosovo's main hospital, University Clinical Centre of Kosovo, UCCK, and also worked with the German Society of Urology, raising funds for Kosovo's health service. He remains in both posts today.

In 2007, he and his son set up Medicus, according to registration documents obtained from Kosovo's company register. It appears that Dervish has continued to attend international conferences because his name appears on literature for a symposium in Turkey organised in April. Dervishi refused to comment when contacted by Prishtina Insight.

According to a 2010 book by Italian journalists, Lupi Nella Nebbia, [Wolves in the Mist] written by two Italian journalists, Giuseppe Ciulla and Vittorio Romano, traffic in organs was going on in Kosovo long before the 2008 raids.

In the book, the authors say they obtained confidential UN documents from 2005, which show that the UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, responsible for policing at the time, was concerned about the high number of requests for blood from private hospitals.

UNMIK suggested there was a need for tighter controls.

But the book quotes EULEX Prosecutor Francesco Mandoi as saying that they only uncovered what was going on in the Medicus clinic by chance.

"We got here by accident," the book cites Mandoi as saying, when "a Turkish citizen who had a kidney removed passed out at the airport in Prishtina, and he made a confession".

The Israeli connection:

The Medicus scandal forms part of a growing number of criminal cases involving Israeli organ bro-

kers and doctors. In a research paper from 2001, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, founder of Organs Watch, an academic research project at Berkeley, California, dealing with organ transplants, said Dr Shapira had been involved in organ trafficking since the early 1990s.

She believes Israel is the biggest global player in the organ trafficking trade. "Israel is at the top," she said in an earlier interview. "It has tentacles reaching out worldwide."

Until 2008, no law in Israel banned the use of trafficked organs in the country while for religious reasons, donor rates are very low.

In Scheper-Hughes's 2001 report,

she wrote: "When Shapira's hand was slapped by an ethics review board... [in Israel] in the mid-1990s, Shapira simply moved his illicit practice overseas - to Turkey and to countries in Eastern Europe where the considerable economic chaos of the past decade has created parallel markets in bodies for sex and for kidneys."

As the Medicus scandal broke, a South African hospital chain admitted its part in an organ trafficking ring that stretched from Israel to South Africa and Brazil. The case first became known in 2003, when arrests were made in Brazil and South Africa.

Investigators believe that Brazilians who passed a medical checkup were flown to South Africa where their kidneys were extracted for transplants for the use of Israeli patients. Eastern Europeans were also donors, according to reports.

In another case that emerged in New York last year, Eastern Europeans were flown into New York to sell their organs. Levy I z h a k

Rosenbaum, of New Jersey, admitted to an undercover FBI agent that he had been fixing organ transplants for ten years, according to New Jersey prosecution documents seen by Prishtina Insight. This case and that in South Africa are among a handful of successful prosecutions involving organ trafficking.

The Medicus indictments are expected to receive confirmation from the Prishtina District Court in December - the next step in what promises to be a long and complicated case.



19 November 2010

Wanted

SONMEZ,



2010/39869
SONMEZ



2010/39869
SONMEZ



19 November 2010

Wanted

HAREL, Moshe



2010/39869
SONMEZ

Legal Status	
Present family name:	HAREL
Forename:	MOSHE
Sex:	MALE
Date of birth:	3 January 1950 (60 years old)
Place of birth:	ISTANBUL, Turkey
Nationality:	Israel, Turkey
Offences	
Categories of Offences:	CRIMES AGAINST LIFE AND HEALTH, PEOPLE SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING & ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION
Arrest Warrant Issued by:	DISTRICT COURT OF PRISTINE KOSOVO / UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo)
IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION CONTACT	

Legal Status	
Present family name:	SONMEZ
Sex:	MALE
Date of birth:	30 June 1957 (53 years old)
Place of birth:	Turkey
Nationality:	Turkey
Offences	
Categories of Offences:	CRIMES AGAINST LIFE AND HEALTH, PEOPLE SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING & ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION
Arrest Warrant Issued by:	DISTRICT COURT OF PRISTINA / UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo)
IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION CONTACT	
YOUR NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICE	

Soaring Over Serbia and Kosovo

Perhaps you think that you have seen everything worth seeing in Serbia but maybe you should just change perspective. Try paragliding and after few minutes, when the adrenalin rush subsides, you might just spot some things you haven't seen before.



By Gordana Andric

From Kanjiza near the border with Hungary, to Zlatibor, Bor or Kopaonik in the south, and in Kosovo's north, you'll see paragliders in the sky every weekend when the weather's good. There are a huge number of paragliding clubs in Serbia and most of them will arrange you an introductory tandem flight, with costs ranging from 30 euro to 100 euro.

Kosovo held its first paragliding competition this summer in the northern hills, near the town of Zvečan. And in the town of Mitrovica, there is an active community of paragliders among Serbs.

"Everything depends on the weather and winds. With the right wind and a clear sky, you can fly as long as you want. When we paraglide... we are using the same principles as birds, we are flying with nature, that's the beauty of these flights. You don't need an engine or an airport," says Branislav Miljkovic from Belgrade based paragliding club, Orao.

To fly tandem you need no experience, your instructor will take care of everything.

Preparation takes only a couple of minutes. In

fact, once you're strapped in, you'll get a quick brief on the take-off and how to behave in the air and you're off. "Once you take-off, you will experience something that you will remember for the rest of your life," says Miljkovic.

Most paragliding clubs from the capital take to the air in Rajac or Vrsac. In the last couple of years, Rajac, on the Suvobor mountain, about 100 kilometres from Belgrade, has become a popular tourist destination, but it's still not overcrowded. Peace, nature and traditional Serbian cuisine are what attract people to this region and soaring above Rajac offers magnificent views of the local villages and the neighbouring mountains Ovcara and Kablar.

At the foot of Suvobor is Ljig, which is not a town of a great beauty nor does it have impressive historical monuments, but it does have some reasonable traditional restaurants and if you've never taken a bath in sparkling mineral water, well now's your chance! The pools in town are filled by natural spring water which is carbonated on its passage through the limestone rocks. Ljig's springs also

provide the town with healthy drinking water.

About 80 kilometres to the north-east of Belgrade is Vrsac and paragliding from the hills around the city offers great views of the Kula Breg, a 15th century tower and the seemingly endless vineyards that surround the town.

Kopaonik and Zlatibor, the winter's most popular skiing destinations are also popular

lots of calm sunny days. And if you're still unsure if this is for you, you can fit in some skiing and good night life as a fall back.

On the route of every paragliding fan is Sicevo. The village is located in Sicevo Gorge and gives a breathtaking view on the canyon that river Nisava has carved between mountains

Svrlijske planine and Suva planina. The gorge is just 14 kilometres far from city of Nis.

There are many hills and mountains that surround Kraljevo have been attracting paragliders pilots for years and a flight from the Stolovi mountain provide a great view of the medieval Maglic fortress. Maglic is on the western slope of the mountain, near the Ibar

with paragliding clubs. Both mountains have

gorge. The fortress has seven towers and a dungeon. Inside, it's still possible to see the remains of a palace, barracks, and the church of Saint George. Historians don't know much about the origins of the fortress but it's believed that the fortress was built in the first half of the 13th century by Stefan I or his son Uros I.

If you decide not just to look at the fortress from the sky, but to actually visit it – be careful where you step. The paths to the top are a little overgrown and are steep in places and the fortress itself could do with a little maintenance, so be careful on the ramparts – but what a view!

For those who find that just one trip isn't enough, there are several schools where you can learn to fly solo. Orao and Jat both have licences to train beginners. Training is one on one and usually held on weekends. Basic training lasts about 15 days, but in order to obtain an international licence to fly on your own you have to spend 15 hours in the air and get a medical certificate. Training costs from 400 euro to 500 euro.



Forts' Conversion to Resorts Stirs Fears in Montenegro

Conservationists are questioning plans to build massive tourist complexes around several Austro-Hungarian fortresses.



By Nela Lazarevic

Conservation activists are worried about plans to turn half a dozen former Austro-Hungarian fortresses in Montenegro's scenic Bay of Kotor into thousands of square meters of tourist accommodation facilities by 2020.

The plans form part of a broader strategy aimed at raising the

quality of tourist accommodation in Montenegro, transforming the Adriatic coastal into an elite destination.

But members of civil society and international organizations fear the government and its investors lack the expertise to preserve the historic characteristics of the fortresses, built when the bay formed part of the Habsburg Empire.

The Bay was the southernmost border of the Habsburg Monarchy for the most part of the 19th century, up till its fall at the end of the

World War One.

Concern centres on whether the extent of the building will affect the historic and cultural characteristics of the forts. "The authorities often try to meet investors' needs while neglecting [the question of] natural and cultural preservation," a 2008 study, The Coastal Area Management Project (CAMP) feasibility study for Montenegro, stated.

One of the investors, RCG Invest, a joint venture between the owner of Budva-based Tradeunique, Marko Latinovic,

and his Russian partners, plan to build a 45,000-square-metre resort round the isolated Arza fortress on the Lustica peninsula.

Belonging to the municipality of Herceg-Novi, the fort lies at the entrance of the bay, known as Boka Kotorska.

Nearby, on the same peninsula, a recently completed urbanisation study for Lustica recommends a resort of similar dimensions around the Kabala, Lazine and Oskorusa forts, which are currently ringed by lush vegetation.

In the immediate vicinity of the

Lustica peninsula, the government is seeking investors to transform the state-protected Mamula fort on the small island of Lastavica, at the entrance to the bay, into another ambitious resort.

Above the UNESCO-protected town of Kotor, meanwhile, Swedish investors plan to create a resort around the fort of Vrmac, comprising tens of thousands of square metres of land, although Kotor municipality and local NGOs managed to get the construction density for this project reduced.

Culture



Kosovo's Mysterious Dialect Fades Away

Under pressure from language purists, who disapprove of Albanians using Slavic words, the unique speech of the Rahovec region, which combines Albanian, Bulgarian and Serbian, is dying out.



By Besiana Xharra

The small town of Rahovec in the fertile Dukagjin valley of western Kosovo is mainly famed for its wines, which mix varieties plucked from all over the world.

But one local blend that is less well known is the area's unique local dialect, which mingles elements of Albanian, Serbian and Bulgarian.

Today, however, anti-Serbian sentiment, outward migration and the fact that the language is not being taught in school, mean that the dialect is fast disappearing.

The origin of Rahovec's dialect remains an object of dispute among historians, linguists and locals. Rahovec is nowhere near the Bulgarian or Serbian border.

Some locals have no idea where their words came from. Hajrullah Bajra, an English teacher in Rahovec, knows only that it is "a mixture of Serbian, Albanian and Bulgarian, and the [unique] structure of the sentences and words mean that only the people of Rahovec can understand it".

Kosovo academic Mark Krasniqi believes the dialect reflects Rahovec's traditional wine-based economy. Before the Kosovo conflict erupted in the 1990s, he explains, wine and

brandy in Rahovec were almost exclusively produced by Serbs. Local Albanians were better known for growing the grapes. A common language emerged between Serbs and Albanians to aid commerce, he believes.

But this theory does not command universal acceptance. Joseph Muller, an Austrian who travelled through Kosovo in the 19th Century, investigating the history of Serbs and Albanians, also took an interest in the dialect.

Muller wrote that it dated from the aftermath of the Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule from 1804 to 1813.

Before the 1804 uprising, he wrote, large Albanian communities, originally from Shkodra, in Albania, and from Prizren and Vushtrri, in Kosovo, lived around Kraljevo and Valjevo in central Serbia.

These families left the area during the uprising and settled in Rahovec, where they brought their strange mixture of Serbian and Albanian speech. He makes no mention of where the Bulgarian words might have come from.

A Disappearing Dialect

While you can still hear the dialect spoken on the streets of the town, most people say it is disappearing, though no statistics exist on how many people still use it.

Some want to see the back of it, maintaining that Serbian words have no place today among Kosovo Albanians.

Agim Vinca, Kosovo's best-known linguist, urges Albanians to forget this Slavic-influenced dialect and concentrate on learning proper Albanian.

"As Rahovec has only a small population, this dialect is likely to disappear quickly," he said. "It simply makes no sense that people are even now using Serbian words," he added.

Professor Sabahudin Cena, who hails from Rahovec, is famous in his hometown for his drive to "clean up" the Albanian language. But was not willing to discuss the future of the Rahovec dialect when contacted by Balkan Insight. "The dialect is disappearing, so I have decided to not speak any more about it," he said.

Krenare Luzha, an Albanian teacher in Rahovec, told Balkan Insight there was no way of preserving the language apart from teaching it at school, which was not an option.

Local Serbs were also quickly losing the dialect as they left the area and those who remained were being taught standard Serbian at school, he noted.

"Twelve years after the war, today in the streets of Rahovec, you can hear a pure Albanian language, and this is thanks to professors who have for a long time been urging parents to communicate with their children in [standard] Albanian," he said.

One middle-school student from the town said that still heard the dialect but did not understand it.

"My grandmother speaks a lot of Serbian words, but I and my brother talk Albanian because that is what we were taught by our parents and at school," he said.

Sali Sallteku, director of education in the municipality, said that while the town's schools teach Albanian, the language spoken at home was a private matter.

"We can't go into people's houses to tell people how to talk," he said. "All we can do is to influence young people in their learning."

Ragip Mulaku, head of Albanian language at the Albanological Institute in Pristina, agreed.

"Nobody can stop a dialect being spoken at home," he said. "It is the impact of the schools and the media that will influence these people to give up their mixed Albanian and Serbian dialect."

Mulaku thought the dialect still had some life in it - though its ultimate extinction is inevitable. "It will be several generations before pure Albanian is spoken in Rahovec," Mulaku predicted.

Do you speak Rahovec?

In a bakery in Rahovec, you might hear someone say: "Sa osht ky hleb?", which means, "How much does that bread cost". In standard Albanian, the phrase would be "Sa kushton buka?" "Hleb" is the word for bread in both Serbian and Bulgarian.

After visiting the doctor, a Rahevoce person might say: "Kam shkujtun dje ne lekar" which means "Yesterday, I went to the doctor". In Albanian, it would be "Dje kam vizitur mjekun". "Lekar" is Serbian for doctor.

Kosovo's only real Irish Pub...

PUB QUIZ
Every Thursday at 7.30pm
For charity 20% off all bar food!



Restaurant "ICI"

Traditional French Cuisine in a warm African setting



Ici means 'here' in French, and if it is the best of Gallic cuisine you are looking for, Ici is a good place to start.

Sample quality French delicacies such as Foie Gras and fine cuts of meat, such as entrecote, at Kosovo's best French restaurant, Ici.

Why not try some innovative sauces with your steak made of seasonal quince, fig or orange?

Ici is open every day from 8am to 11pm, and on Sundays from 5pm, for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Next to EULEX Farmed
044 418 598 or 049 295515
Restaurant.ici@gmail.com

Not Jolly, But Decent Curry at Bollywood



By Hannibal

Eating at Bollywood is a unique experience, in good, bad and slightly bizarre ways.

Wedge between some ugly blocks at the bottom of the Zanzibar road, off Mother Teresa, the building looks like it should be a veterinary surgery rather than an eatery. It feels clinical, rather than homely.

And despite the enticing, lively title, Bollywood does not have the kind of atmosphere you would associate with the all-singing, all-dancing, colourful and brash film-making scene of Indian.

When we visited, there were no other customers and no music. Just silence, which was actually a refreshing change from the usual classical hits played backwards on synthesized saxophone.

After hilarious and protracted attempts to order a gin and tonic, my partner settled for a Coke - the joys of a world-renown brand. I had a beer, which was also causing a few issues to the waiting staff.

But the menus arrived, and our spirits

lifted at the sight of a fine selection of Indian dishes, ranging from meaty curries, to lentil dals, nan bread and a variety of rice dishes.

For starters we plumped for vegetable momos, the Tibetan style dumplings which were first brought to Prishtina by the Nepalese restaurant, chicken tikka and some onion bhajis.

The momos were decent but steamed for much too long, thus taking on a gloopy consistency which I haven't experienced in Bollywood's rival eatery.

The chicken tikka was tasteless and the meat like bullets, but the bhajis were a success: piping hot, light, sweet and spicy.

Luckily, things improved drastically for the main course. Our various dishes arrived in a selection of mini, cauldrons, which kept the food warm throughout the meal, no thanks to the absurdly large, flat silver plates.

The chicken Madras and chicken Karai curry dishes were nicely balanced, with enough spice to tickle the back of your mouth, and most importantly, they were not too greasy, the usual pitfall of Indian food.

The palak paneer was an extraordinary green colour but was fresh and smooth.

We ended up with a plain nan bread rather than its Paswari cousin, but the



Bollywood looks more like a vets than a restaurant from the outside

ordering had proved so complicated I decided to let that one slip.

For dessert we were offered a complimentary sweet, which was a little like a flat doughnut. Not bad, given that we were not paying.

Bollywood also offers delivery, but given the staffs' limited grasp of English, a take-home is probably safer.

This place isn't going to win any awards,

but it's not a bad venue for a meal and can still compete with its slightly superior rival for the South Asian crown, Himalaya in the Qafa centre.



Bollywood Restaurant
Hajdar Dushi, Prishtina
045 463 186, 049 304 153
11am to 10pm

Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

Prishtina Insight has teamed up with these five excellent venues to offer a limited number of complimentary copies of Kosovo's only English-language newspaper. Grab a copy of the publication and settle down with a drink or a meal to read it.

Filikaqa Sports Bar

Prishtina's best sports bar offers the perfect setting to watch a game on over a dozen HDTV screens, guzzle down a metre of beer and tuck in to some delicious food. There is enough space to accommodate large crowds and still maintain enough legroom and breathing space between rival supporters, or those wanting to watch different games, whether it is a Liverpool match, NFL game, or cycling race. Filikaqa's menu includes spicy chicken wings, beef nachos, cheese-stuffed pizza, fried chicken, burgers and fries. Every Friday, join Filikaqa for karaoke nights.



Filikaqa
Rr. Mujo Ulqinaku BL 4/1
Pejton, Prishtina
www.filikaqa.com
+381 38 244 288

Cavallero Mexican Restaurant

You can almost transport yourself to the Mexican coast, with soaring palm trees and an immaculate five star resort, while dining at Cavallero Mexican Cantina. Mouth-watering appetizers and savoury main dishes are nicely washed down with countless cocktail options and even imported Mexican beer. Skopje-based 'Los Ritmos' entertain diners every Friday and Saturday with their latin beats. For more information, visit their facebook page, or contact them.



Cavallero,
Located next to the ex-UNMIK building
Prishtina
+386 49 619 375
Facebook page

Cantina am-pm Restaurant

Cantina AM-PM is one Prishtina's best places for a nice evening out with excellent food and reasonable prices, starting from less than 5 euro.

With special day and evening menus, Cantina is the place to be for lunches and dinners.

It offers a variety of dishes ranging from salads and sandwiches to Mexican-style tortillas and burritos.

Try the restaurant's amazing Mexican Taquitas for a great experience.

Cantina's cosy interior and friendly staff will make you not want to leave.



Cantina AM-PM
Rr Qamil Hoxha
Prishtina
+386 49 710 710

Hotel AFA

Located in a quiet neighbourhood just outside the city centre, Hotel Afa can guarantee guests a peaceful night while being within walking distance of all the action. This biggest, private-owned, hotel in Prishtina has won a host of awards for its excellent service to customers. It offers a good range of facilities, from an exclusive restaurant to pretty, tranquil garden. Rooms start at 45 euro for a single, and luxury rooms and apartments are available. The hotel's rooms are well appointed and comfortable.



15, Rr Ali Kelmendi,
Sunny Hill,
Prishtina
+381 38/225 226
www.hotelafa.com

Te Komiteti

Te Komiteti's large trees and a beautifully garden, which surround the small outdoor terrace, give you an impression of an exclusive place for impressive people. And this is exactly what it is. From brunch to lunch-time snacks and special evening meals, this restaurant offers dishes comprising quality, varied ingredients, combined to perfection. Alongside one of Prishtina's best 'modern European' style menus, you'll also find a good selection of wine, and great sangria and cocktails.



Te Komiteti
Qamil Hoxha Street
Prishtina
+38138 249 663

Paddy O'Brien's

The staff at Paddy O'Brien's have a saying: "It's easy to walk in, but very hard to leave."

There have been many attempts to establish a proper Irish pub in Prishtina, but this is the only one to hit the spot.

From classic coffees to cocktails, via, of course, Guinness, you really won't find it difficult to select the perfect drink. A mouth-watering menu of Irish specialties is also on offer.



Thursday is pub quiz night, but there is always something going on at the pub, whether it is sport screenings or just a good shindig.

Paddy O'Brien's
Tringe Smajli Street, 045-420900

Jinglebells

If your soul is affected by the grey season then pay a visit to Jinglebells, where you will find all the colours that you've been missing.

Jinglebells is a perfect one-stop-shop for internationals offering a selection of books in various languages and the quickest supply of international newspapers in town. It also offers souvenirs and gifts, such as local handicrafts.



Jinglebells. Bookstore and more.
Ernest Koliqi 12, opposite EULEX HQ
+386(0)49 741 170

Prishtina Diary

Friday, November 26, 2010

Duplex Club, DJ Flow

DJ Flow – the man of Hip Hop will be playing the very best of Hip Hop & R&B, so join them and enjoy the night!



Friday, November 26, 2010

Peppermint Club, DJ Jungle

DJ Jungle will be playing best of Hip Hop and R&B, starting from 11 pm.

Friday, November 26, 2010

Full House, Wiggle Pre Party

Wiggle Pre Party with Secret 47, famous YACINE from Morocco, and Ocean 815, together with two young DJ's from Prishtina Uran B. and Florent Cakiq.

Friday, November 26, 2010

Filikaqa Karaoke night – for reservations call 038 244 288

Saturday, November 27, 2010

Duplex Club, Audi Party of A1 – Audi will display and present the hottest new car in town & much more on the night, with DJ Lil Dirty from Austria!

Austria's DJ Lil Dirty, playing R&B, Hip Hop, Reggaeton and Dancehall. Warm up with DJ Boogie from Skopje.

Lil Dirty's career started in early 90's. His passion for music was inspired by world stars like Michael Jackson and MC Hammer.

Sunday, November 28, 2010

Peppermint Club, celebrating the National 'Red & Black' Flag Day with 'Minatori' Band & DJ Flow, from 10 pm.



Sunday, November 28, 2010

The Albanian organizations network is organizing a concert 'Rock per Bashkim' [Rock for Union], on the National Albanian flag day. The concert will be held in the hall 1st of October, from 8 pm, with Bojken Lako, Bim Bimma, Jericho, the Freelancers, The Glasses, and more. Free Entry!



SKENA UP International Film Festival

Founded in October 2003 by a group of students and young artists, Skena Up is the NGO that organises the International Students' Film and Theatre Festival in Kosovo. Skena Up Festival is unique not only in Kosovo, but also in the wider Balkan region. The eight International Students Film and Theatre Festival, Skena Up will take place from Friday, December 3, until Friday, December 10, 2010, in Kino ABC, National Theatre, Dodona Theatre, Oda Theatre, Art Center, Caffe Bar Kontra.

For full programme of the festival visit www.skenaup.com

A few international names that will be part of the festival include Jan Harlan, executive producer of greatest films directed by the world director, Stanley Kubrick, who has confirmed the participation in SKENA UP Festival. Jan Harlan, who will chair the jury of the film during 8th edition of SKENA UP, will also give a lecture during this edition. He has expressed his desire and enthusiasm to be in Kosovo.



Saturday, December 4, 2010

American Chamber of Commerce, New Year's Gala Dinner and Auction

Objective: Collecting funds for the Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Service at Prishtina University Hospital

Cause: The Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Service's need of establishing a laboratory support for the diagnosis and management of leukemia and related malignancies in Kosovo

Auction: AmCham New Year's Gala Evening will also feature an auction of pictures and jewellery

TAKSIRAT Festival 12

From Friday, November 26, 2010

until December 4, 2010 the twelve festival 'Taksirat' will take place in Skopje.

Known as the best South Eastern winter festival, 'Taksirat' each year is bring more and more famous artists who make the audience enjoy all night long.

This 12 edition of the festival is hosting on its main night:

Saturday, December 4, 2010 White Lies, Paradise Lost, Dubioza Kolektiv, Gentleman & the Evolution, Onyx, Pekinska Patka, Manu Chao la Ventura, Metropolis Arena, from 7 pm, tickets 800/1000 MKD [13.20/16.40] and VIP 1500 MKD [25]



Kosovo Art Gallery

From Thursday, November 25, 2010 the Kosovo Art Gallery is hosting a painting



exhibition from its collections with 42 paintings from the artists: Ibrahim Kodra, Muslim Mulliqi, Nysret Salihmihiqi, Rexhep Ferri, Nebih Muriqi, Mustafa Ferizi, Hysni Krasniqi, Ymer Shaqiri, Nikola Gvozdenoviq, Ismet Jonuzi, Musa Prelvukaj, Budim Berisha, Zake Prelvukaj and Bedri Emra.

The exhibition will be open until December 7, 2010. For more information, call: +381 38/225 627, 227 833, e-mail: gak@kujtesa.com

www.kosovaart.com, Address: "Agim Ramadani" No. 60.

Sunday, November 28, 2010 – national exhibition on the National Albanian Flag Day, by the Kosovo Figurative Artist Association. This exhibition will last for two weeks.

From 18 November until 27 November 2010, Kosova Art Gallery is hosting a personal exhibition

of Macedonian painter Tanja Balac.

Born in Skopje, Tanja graduated in 1991 at the Faculty of fine arts, the department of painting. In 2008 she received her Master's degree from the Fine Arts Department in Skopje. She has participated in more than 80 groups, in her homeland and abroad: France, USA, Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, Sweden. And had more than ten solo exhibitions in the region and over the Atlantic ocean.

Wednesday, December 8, 2010

Personal exhibition of Adem Dermaku, a Kosovo graphic painter, living in Switzerland. A young, talented Kosovo guy will present his magnificent works in the Kosovo Art Gallery.

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Personal exhibition of the well know Kosovo designer Lyra Zajmi, as part of her project

'Tourism development in the mountains Sharr region.'



National Theatre of Kosovo

Friday, November 26, 2010 & Saturday, Nov. 27, 2010 starting from 8 pm:

Peer Gynt play in Albanian language. Cooperation between the National Theatre of Kosovo and the Albanian Theatre from Skopje is supported by the 'IBSEN AWARD 2009' and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania.

Peer Gynt is considered one of the best plays by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Peer Gynt is a Norwegian farm lad who wastes his time in lazy dreaming, boasting and brawling – a symbol of the man who ever colours truth and fact in wishful compromises, evasion and selfishness.

The play is directed by Slobodan Unkovski, assisted by Kushtim Bekteshi, Ivana Angelovska, and Kristina Dimitrova, scene director Miodrag Tabacki, costume designer Aleksandar Noshpall, music Jordan Kostov, choreography Gjergj Prevazi.

Roles: Bajrush Mjaku, Xhevdet



Jashari, Fisnik Zeqiri, Yllka Mujo, Albulena Kryeziu, Vlora Nikci, Ardian Morina, Ylber Murtezi, Besart Zeneli, Mirlinda Saiti, etc.

To see the promo of the play, visit

<http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DmDQ4FBxpb80See&h=e3f4f>

Tickets costs 3 euro, while for students and disabled people, only 1 euro.

Monday, November 29, 2010 & Tuesday, November 30, 2010:

'Duke Pritur Godonë' [Waiting for Godot], another play by the National Theatre of Kosovo by Samuel Becket, directed by Drita

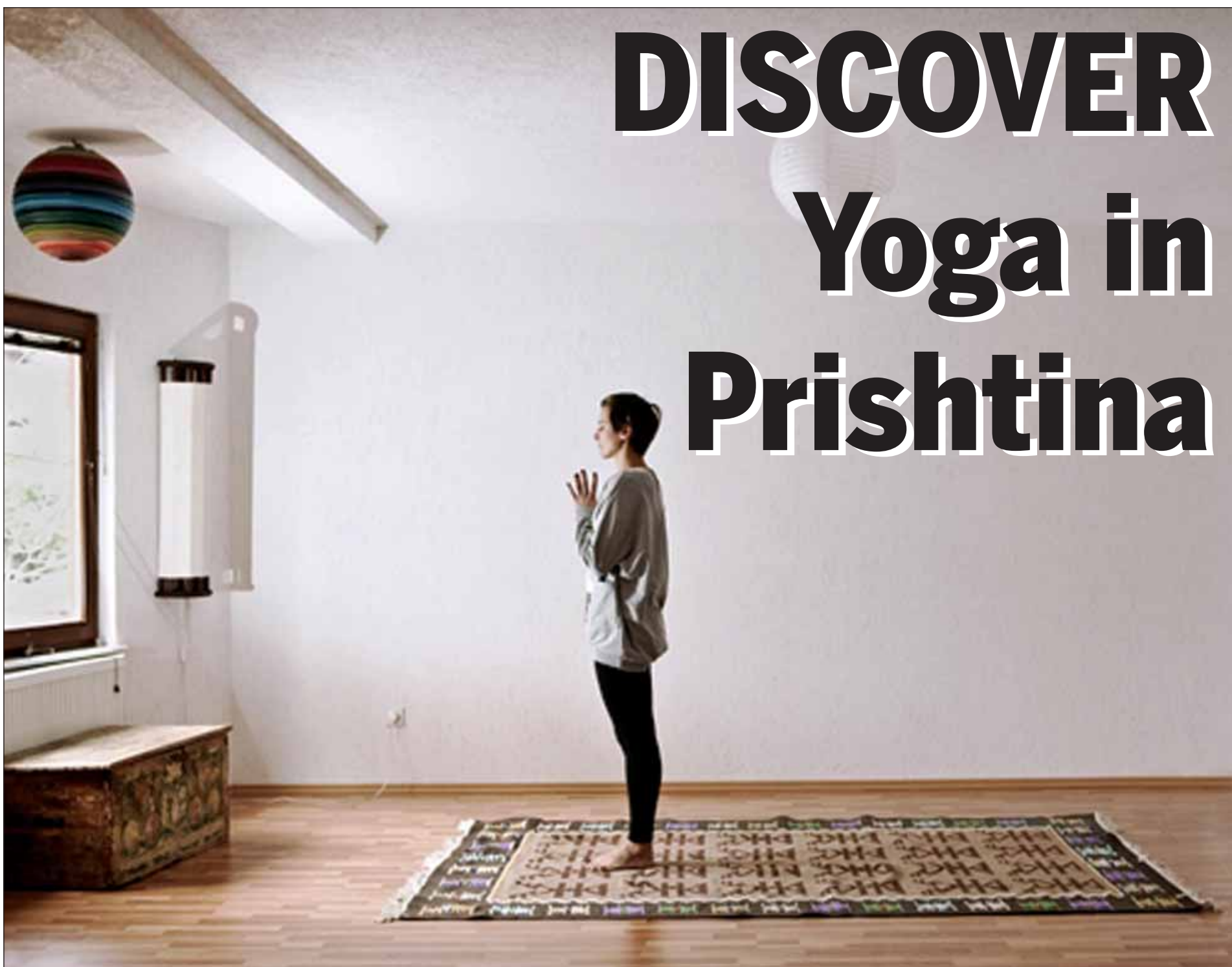
Begolli – an independent play in a cooperation with the National Theatre.

Monday, November 29, 2010, from 8 pm

'Heshtje' [Silence] – a theatre play taking place in the National Theatre of Kosovo, Monday from 8 pm, by the author Rafet Abazi, directed by Arta Kallaba, played by famous actors: Xhevdet Jashari, Yllka Gashi, Cun Lajci, Igballe Qena, Bislim Mucaj, Leonora Mehmeti, Enver Petrovci, Donat Qosja.

For reservations call 038 224 397 or 044 430 693, or at the National Theatre from 10 am – 1 pm and 5 – 8 pm; or by email: info@teatrikombetareu

DISCOVER Yoga in Prishtina



Alketa Xhafa Mripa is an artist, mother of two, and a yoga pioneer in Kosovo



By Inge Baanders

“Sun salutations can energise and warm you, even on the darkest, coldest winter day,” Carol Krucoff, a renowned yoga teacher once exclaimed.

To skeptics, yoga is seen as a fancy form of stretching, but an increasing number of people are ascribing to Carol Krucoff’s view, even in Kosovo.

Translating as ‘union’ from Sanskrit, yoga aims to create a balance between body and mind by focusing on breathing and posture.

Yoga comprises a variety of styles; for a smooth introduction into yoga there is the slow-paced Hatha-style. Vinyasa forms a more vigorous type of yoga with a particular focus on breath-movement synchronisation. For those die-hard yoga-fans there is Ashtanga, an intense and physically demanding branch, also referred to as power yoga.

Originating in India, Yoga has

spread across the world in recent years thanks, in part, to the endorsement of stars such as Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Prishtina’s inspiring Alketa Xhafa Mripa is an artist, mother of two and a yoga pioneer and teacher in Kosovo. In spite of her busy schedule, she radiates positive energy and makes you instantly feel at ease.

While living in England, Alketa started practicing yoga in 2000 and studied Hatha Yoga at the British School of Yoga.

It is then she “fell in love with the whole philosophy [of yoga] and its beauty of postures, breathing techniques and meditation”, as she explains in an interview with the website Kosovo 2.0.

After working as a yoga teacher in London for a while, she moved back to Kosovo where she continued to share her passion for yoga with those around her.

Alketa now teaches classes from her home. “I wanted to remove the boundaries of a studio, step away from the teacher-student relationship. Yoga is more than coming in and out of class, it is a way of life”,

Alketa told Prishtina Insight.

Stepping into Alketa’s world feels like stepping into a different reality and you are overcome by an oasis of rest.

Yoga seems to come naturally to Alketa and she moves with a remarkable ease, which she passes on to those in class. “You have to focus and feel the movement,” she said. “Your body will find the postures itself, I am just here to show the path,” she says.

When you misplace your left foot or end up doing an enthusiastic sun salutation rather than warrior pose, Alketa is there to gently readjust your pose.

Although you might discover muscles of which you were unaware, you are left feeling relaxed, with a clear mind and renewed energy to face the reality of everyday life.

The warm and friendly atmosphere makes for a good environment for blossoming friendships, and people often stay after class to sip a cup of mountain tea.

Combining different styles in her classes, they are accessible to all. “People from all walks of life

come here, men and women,” Alketa adds.

Asked where she finds her inspiration for the classes, Alketa explained: “I find it in everyday life. Yoga is everywhere, from going to the supermarket to bringing my kids to school”.

“After finishing my studies, I thought I knew everything there

was to know about yoga. But I only really learned when I started teaching. In England it was good that I had my teachers around.

“The lack of this when coming to Kosovo definitely formed a challenge, but I am enjoying every second of it.”



Photo by Ardithe Mulla

Inside Prishtina

Ecosovo

The Green Vote



By Elizabeth Gowling

Name one policy pledge you have heard from any of Kosovo's political parties in this run-up to the elections next month. It's not easy, is it. And if you passed that test, can you name one environmental policy pledge?

We contacted each of the major political parties and asked them to tell us their policy on the environment. LDK, PDK, LDD and AAK failed to provide us with any information, (there was some embarrassment as spokespeople and advisers rummaged around for something – anything – to send me. 'To be honest, this isn't one of our priorities' said one adviser candidly) and there is nothing on their websites (in one case there isn't even a website) on environmental policy.

However, each of the other major parties have published a position on environmental issues, and we present an overview of these here. Many of them were careful to say that there was more to come, and further consultation to be done both before the election and once they were in government.

Voters, or those who have influence on voters, can draw their own conclusions about what custody of Kosovo's natural resources might look like in a government led by any one of the parties whose policies are summarised below, or by any one of the parties who had nothing to say on the subject.

There were many points of overlap in the manifestos. These are identified below, but first we present the Unique Selling Points of each party, as regards their environmental policy.

The fullest environmental policies came from FER. They are the only part to propose environmental impact assessment, as provided for in law but not carried out, composting and product life cycle assessments.

Vetëvendosje are unique in presenting the environment as 'an integral part of freedom'. They commit to the cultivation of agricultural space and its protection from building and industrial development.

PSD have an innovative suggestion for the fly-ash resulting from burning lignite as KEK does. As this can be used to produce 'ashcrete' they say they will investigate the feasibility of setting up an ashcrete production facility and requiring construction companies in Kosovo to use a set proportion of environmentally-friendly building material.

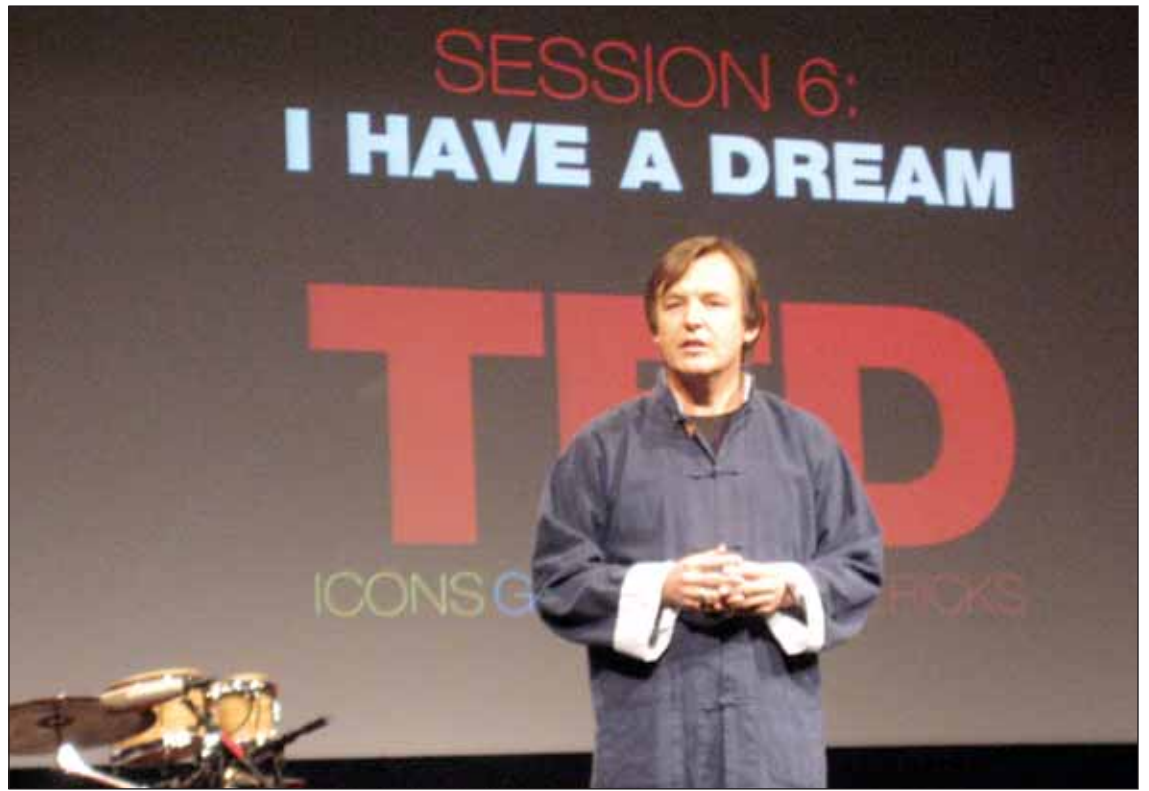
AKR's focus on the environment is largely in the context of agriculture. They commit to raising standards of agricultural produce so consumers have more faith in local products. They also pledge a building policy requiring future building to have zero calorie loss, and their transport policy has environmental benefits through the revitalisation and electrification of the rail network. They also promise to create parks 'wherever possible'.

The areas where the parties have overlap are as follows:

- Vetëvendosje, PSD and FER are all explicit about the need to balance economic with ecological development (as PSD put it 'a bad environment costs money').
- PSD, FER, and AKR all make commitments to the improved management and processing of waste.
- PSD, FER, and AKR are all also committed to investigating or encouraging the use of alternative energy sources.
- FER, AKR and PSD all refer to the incentive to improve Kosovo's environment as a prerequisite for entry into the EU, with FER specifically committing to work to reach EU standards on vehicle emissions
- Vetëvendosje and AKR both identify work they would do to develop ecotourism in Kosovo.
- PSD and FER both refer to policies based on the principle that 'the polluter pays', with FER including in their programme the establishment of pollution measuring stations.
- PSD and Vetëvendosje both commit to action on the specific pollution in Mitrovica.
- AKR and PSD both pledge development of water treatment and infrastructure.
- FER commits to initiatives (local or central, when it is a question of protected areas) against deforestation and the requirement for those who exploit and pollute the environment to contribute to reforestation or creation of green spaces. AKR offer support for the forestry industry but say that they want to balance this with a reforestation policy.
- AKR and FER both have policies on promoting organic agriculture.
- FER and AKR both commit to increasing the recycling of waste.

So who would you vote for?

Elizabeth Gowling is a founder member of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovar NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She can be reached at theideaspартnership@gmail.com



TED Event Planned for Prishtina



By Lawrence Marzouk

The global phenomenon of TED conferences is arriving in Prishtina, it was announced this week.

TEDxPrishtina 2011 is the first event in Kosovo that brings people together to share a TED-like experience.

Video and live speakers will combine to spark deep discussion, according to the TED Prishtina announcement.

Ardit Bejko, spokesperson for the event, said: "At the moment, we are finalising the theme of the event."

"We can start identifying the speakers for TEDxPrishtina only after we decide on the theme."

"Once everyone is familiarised with the theme, they will be able to suggest speakers for our event. We want to keep this event as open as possible, in the spirit of TED."

TED, Technology Entertainment and Design, is a global set of conferences curated by the American private non-profit Sapling Foundation, formed to disseminate "ideas worth spreading".

Since June 2006 the talks have been offered for free viewing online, under a Creative Commons license, through TED.com.

As of July 2010, over 700 talks are available free online. By January 2009 they had been viewed 50 million times. In July 2010, the viewing figure stood at more than 290 million, reflecting a still growing global audience.

TED Spat

Sarah Silverman

TED drew some controversy when in 2010 Sarah Silverman was invited to speak at the conference, and in response to her speech about adopting a "retarded" child, TED organiser Chris Anderson posted on his Twitter account, "I know I shouldn't say this about one of my own speakers, but I thought Sarah Silverman was god-awful..."

Anderson later deleted his tweet, but Silverman responded via her Twitter account: "Kudos to [Chris Anderson] for making TED an unsafe haven for all! You're a barnacle of mediocrity on Bill Gates' asshole."

Anderson apologised for his tweet on his Posterous account, but also wrote "Call me stuffy, but I still think humour about terminally ill 'retarded' kids is an acquired taste... And not a taste I personally want to acquire."

As of August 2010, the video of Silverman's speech has not been posted on the TED website.

Shop Review:

Beauty Souvenir and Paintings Store

Located just next to the new catholic cathedral on the edge of Pejton, this souvenir and art shop offers up a colourful choice of art and traditional items.

Both modern and traditional original paintings are available, as well as some reproductions.



The shop also provides different types of frames to complete the package.

In the shop, you can find different souvenirs, mostly with traditional motives, and many modern ones.

You can also, somewhat bizarrely, have your own design printed on cups and mugs for only 6 euro a piece, and all within a day.

Other special items include Kosovo maps,



designed with Trepca mine stones, which cost 15 euro.

Paintings vary in cost from 30 to 3000 euro. sculptures range from 150 to 1500 euro.

Beauty Shop
Perandori Justinian Street, 9 am to 8 pm
Tel: 038 224 952

Comment: Will Serbs Ever Learn to Love NATO?

The Serbs' staunch opposition to the Alliance is hampering the development of a common security position in the region.



By Jelena Radoman and
Bledar Feta

The Western Balkans may not feature high on NATO's current agenda due to other, more pressing concerns in other parts of the globe. But in the region itself, the Alliance is still seen as relevant.

Among other issues, the presence of peacekeeping troops in Kosovo and the prospect of NATO membership for the Western Balkans, as part of a wider Euro-Atlantic integration plan, are widely viewed as crucial to maintaining the region's stability.

But there is one key exception to this view. Public opinion among Serbs in Serbia, Montenegro and the Bosnian Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, remains sharply opposed - both to NATO itself and to the prospect of NATO membership.

NATO's image among Serbs remains tainted by vivid memories of the Alliance's bombing campaigns against the Bosnian Serbs in 1995 and against Yugoslavia in 1999. The two interventions are fodder for often-repeated accusations that NATO is an "anti-Serbian" organization.

In Serbia, the political establishment takes it as a "given" that public opinion is against membership. In a poll conducted by state-run Radio Television Serbia in January 2010, more than half of the respondents rejected membership of the Alliance as an option. The political establishment invests little energy in trying to dissuade the distrustful public of this opinion. Instead, since 2007, Serbia has tried out the politics of military neutrality as an alternative.

Meanwhile, Serbia is interested in participating in peacekeeping operations under the United Nations flag or the European Union umbrella. In this way, Belgrade officials balance neutrality with an ambition to develop Serbia's military

capacity.

Serbian opposition to NATO is not limited to Serbia. It is equally strong among the Serbs in Montenegro who make up 32 per cent of the country's population. In Bosnia, 63 per cent of the population in the mainly Serb Republika Srpska opposes NATO membership, according to a poll conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI, in August 2010.

Bosnian Serb opposition to NATO is easily explained, taking into account NATO's decisive action in ending the country's 1992-5 civil war, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the Alliance's role in terminating Serbian control over Kosovo in 1999, which then declared independence from Serbia in February 2008. The Serbs' close economic, political and religious ties to Russia - which fiercely opposes NATO's eastwards expansion - is another factor.

In Bosnia, popular opposition among Serbs to the Alliance undermines the ability of the country to embrace a NATO-centered security policy. Although all Serbian parties officially support a parliamentary declaration that has committed the country to working toward Bosnian membership, the Republika Srpska's powerful Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, has voiced increasing skepticism.

Dodik and his party, the Independent Democrats, SNSD, have even threatened to call a referendum on the issue of Bosnia's NATO membership. If the current political crisis in the country continues, Dodik's SNSD, and the second biggest Bosnian Serb party, the Serbian Democratic Party, SDS, may move towards more outright opposition to NATO membership.

Montenegro, on the other hand, is progressing toward NATO membership, although its leadership faces significant opposition from Serbian public opinion. There is a visible line of demarcation in the country between the parties of a so-called "pro-NATO orientation," and those opposed to such a step. All the key Serbian parties oppose NATO membership,

including the most vocal New Serb Democracy, NOVA, and the Democratic Serbian Party, DSS.

The Serbian minority, which strongly rejected the 2006 referendum dissolving the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, has accepted the new state but still overwhelmingly oppose Montenegro's entrance into the Alliance.

By contrast, the great majority of Serbs in Montenegro support the process of incorporation into the European Union, primarily due to the belief that entering the EU will bring economic progress and a higher standard of living.

This split among the Serbs over Euro-Atlantic integration stems partly from the failure of their respective political elites to enlighten them as to what Euro-Atlantic integration really means.

Serbs in Bosnia and Montenegro and their elites are likely to continue to follow this pro-EU, anti-NATO trend until Serbia itself changes its strategy, since Serbia's official line influences the Serbian population no matter where they live in the region.

NATO's negative image among Serbs cannot be changed overnight. The diplomatic tools that NATO has successfully employed in other candidate states are unlikely to bear fruit among this community in the near future.

There is still an opportunity for NATO to engage with domestic stakeholders over defence reform and international peacekeeping operations. But for that to happen, the Serbs will need to reach more of a consensus than they have so far over what it means to be protected and by whom.

Jelena Radoman is a research fellow at the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy and a research associate at the Athens Working Group: Transforming the Balkans, a programme of the Hellenic Centre for European Studies.

Bledar Feta is junior researcher
at the Athens Working Group:

Transforming the Balkans.

<http://www.ekemprogram.org/csis>

Outside In Why Can't Ibrahim Rugova Rest in Peace?



By Kreshnik Hoxha

Ibrahim Rugova, the man who died a hero after spending his life resisting Serb oppression through peaceful means, is unable to rest in peace due to the misuse of his image and legacy in Kosovo's daily politics.

The image and legacy of Rugova are used as a vote generator by all rebellious channels within LDK who want to have it their way and frankly have nothing creative and original to build their values on.

The first channel came to existence in the aftermath of Rugova's death in 2006, when the LDK witnessed the most shattering fragmentation in its history with Nexhat Daci going his own way to form the LDD. This fragmentation officially marked the start of a new era that would question and challenge the definition of Rugovism.

The perception of Rugovism in LDD clearly was not genuine enough to generate the votes they aspired to. Their theory of Rugovism today translates into 5 to 6 per cent of overall votes and this sheds light to the vagueness of it.

On the other hand, Fatmir Sejdiu led the LDK for just under four years by always trying, but failing miserably, to portray his leadership as a continuation of Rugova. I say he failed miserably, because apart from the obvious Daci fragmentation, the LDK started to shatter from inside due to the lack of a unifying tone in Sejdiu's voice, who paid more attention to the comfort he got from the coalition with the PDK.

This subsequently made Melihate Termkolli walk out of LDK to find a new shelter where Rugovism was most likely to blossom, which of all places happened to be AAK.

And as time went by the ever-so-dull tone of Fatmir Sejdiu resulted in a growing threat to his position as leader of the party.

The most recent threats emanated from Bujar Bukoshi, who claimed that his and Uke Rugova's leadership would reinstall Rugovism in LDK. However, unable to surmount the Sejdiu powers within, Bukoshi and Rugova junior sought shelter by choosing AAK as the final destination. And all of a sudden, a party whose foundations were never based on Rugovism became the nest for preaching it.

And just as Fatmir Sejdiu thought he triumphed in the battle with Bukoshi he lost the entire war with a humiliating defeat to Isa Mustafa.

The newly elected leader called upon Rugovism and promised that his configuration will pave the way to a national LDK victory.

But, it soon became clear that his definition of Rugovism implied small cosmetic changes to the core of LDK in this way repelling Daci's LDD from reunification.

It emerges that the problem with Rugovism is that it's not set in stone and it mutates depending on personal interest and individual calculations.

But, it demonstrates that even after nearly five years since Rugova's death, Kosovo is still smothered by pseudo-Rugovas, who seem to have never grasped the fundamentals of the former Presidents.

And in doing so, they manage to successfully accomplish only one thing: tarnishing and destroying Rugova's legacy.



"No to Nato" - Anti Nato graffiti scrawled across a wall in Belgrade

Community Focus

If you would like your NGO to appear in our Making a Difference feature, please email info@prishtinainsight.com

Hope for the Street Dogs of Kosovo



By Inge Baanders

The large number of stray dogs in Kosovo does not do much for the image of the country, or the dogs, and the sight of 'man's best friend' sniffing through litter bins is all too familiar and disturbing.

But despite the widespread problem, and the presence of a dog shelter on the outskirts of Prishtina since October 2003, the issue remains largely ignored.

An enthusiastic group of volunteers, assembled under the name of Hope for the Street Dogs of Kosovo, is determined to change this.

One of the group's core members, Alexandra, told Prishtina Insight how the group was formed.

"When I worked in Sarajevo, I tried to raise support for the stray dogs there by bringing them to a shelter, collecting money for vaccinations and finding them homes," she said. "It was amazing, people from all over Europe drove to Bosnia to adopt our dogs."

When coming to Kosovo in 2009, she learned about the shelter and started going regularly to walk the dogs.

This is where she met a kindred spirit, Kim, who by coincidence had also been in Sarajevo and now works in Prishtina.

"We noticed not many people came to the shelter and decided we wanted to do something about this. So then we started a dog walking group and spreading a newsletter to raise awareness," Alexandra said.

Currently, the newsletter has more than 100 subscribers. There is a core group of some twelve volunteers who go to the shelter every week to walk the dogs and to bring food.

Additionally, Hope for the Street Dogs of Kosovo receives many individual donations and support in the form of food, collars, volunteers to help out at the shelter and people who actively reach out to find families for the dogs.

"Members of the international community here have adopted lots of dogs and provide valuable support," Alexandra told Prishtina Insight.

"When I saw a dog around our offices,

I started to feed her," she said. "After a while I decided to take the dog, named Daisy by then, to the shelter. We took some pictures of her which we printed in an American newsletter."

This turned out to be a success. Alexandra continued: "Someone from the US forces responded that she wanted to adopt the dog and take her to her home in Seattle. I flew the dog to New York, where she was picked up by her new family."

Some dogs have also found homes with the local population. Alexandra explains that the general culture in Kosovo is not used to having dogs as pets. "We strive for an educational component of love for animals, starting in schools," she added.

Susan, a teacher at Prishtina High School, agrees and has noticed that students, when introduced to the idea, take a real interest. "I have taken a few students to volunteer at the shelter and others have gone to volunteer at their own," she said. "Some of them have gathered and are drawing up a plan to improve the area [in the shelter] for cats."

The shelter is in good general condition and local pet shop Crazy Pets has donated bowls and offers discounts on vaccinations.

Recently, KFOR and Dyn Corps in Prishtina donated 200 meters of weatherproof sheeting to protect the dogs from the approaching winter weather.

The group has many success stories, but help continues to be much needed. Some 50 to 60 dogs remain in the shelter, waiting to be taken for a walk or given a loving home.

Hope for the Street Dogs of Kosovo also strives to halt the increase in the number of dogs in Kosovo. "We try to do what we can as a small group, but we cannot address the plethora of dogs," Alexandra explains.

The group calls for spaying instead of shooting of dogs, and for this calls on the municipality for support.

If you would like to sign up for the newsletter or feel inspired to devote a little bit of your time to this good cause contact kosovostreetdogs@gmail.com. For more information on the dogs and on the group's monthly meetings visit <http://kosovostreetdogs.typepad.com>.



Kosovo Journalist Wins 2010 Balkan Fellowship Prize

Majlinda Aliu from Kosovo has won first prize in this year's Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence Programme for her article "Trapped in Black: Balkan War Widows".

Majlinda, a journalist with Kosovo public television RTK, received an award of 4,000 euro.

Second-place, and a prize of 3,000 was awarded to Macedonian journalist Ruzica Fotinowska for article "Freed prisoners remain caught behind

bars", and third prize, and 1,000 went to Jeton Musliu for his article "Kosovars Turn Blind Eye to Fake Foreign Marriages".

The three prize-winners, selected by a panel of judges including Croatian journalist and writer Slavenka Drakulic, Gerald Knaus, president of the European Stability Initiative and Josef Kirchengast from the Austrian daily newspaper Der Standard, were announced at an award ceremony in Vienna on Friday, November 12.

Members of the jury praised the quality of reporting of all three winning fellows and noted that articles covered topics previously unexplored in the mainstream media and felt that they could serve to bring about important debates on issues of relevance to Balkan society.

This year's writers addressed the topic of 'Taboo' from a host of different angles, exploring issues that shape and change society.

The awards presentation in

Vienna was hosted by the ERSTE foundation, and was attended by eight journalists who participated in the 2010 Programme of the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence.

Initiated by the Robert Bosch Stiftung and ERSTE Foundation in 2007, in co-operation with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, BIRN, each year the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence pro-

vides financial and professional support to foster quality reporting in the Balkans region.

Additionally, the programme encourages regional networking among journalists and provides balanced coverage on complex reform issues that are central to the region as well as to the European Union.

The eight journalists participating at this year's seminar were chosen from among 149 applicants from nine Balkan countries.

My KOSOVO



By Behar Belani

Hi my name is Behar Belani, I'm from Fushe Kosove, and I'm 16 years old, but I was born in Prishtina. My favourite hobby is photography and during my free time I try to make different photos and I like all types of photos.

I ended first place in a photo competition during an event for refugees, where many peers were participating from different parts of Kosovo.

That was the first time I had the opportunity to show my work and skills.

If only I had the opportunity to have a better camera, like the one with which I made these photos, I would be able to become a professional photographer.

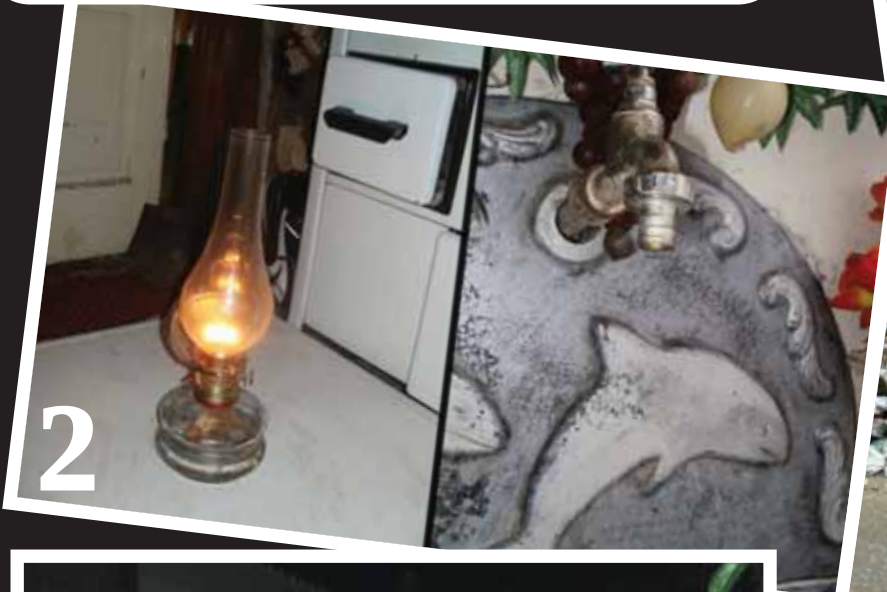
In these photos, I have shown how Kosovo looks and have tried to compare similar objects, like for example a beautiful, colourful house and another with no garden.

We, at Prishtina Insight, would like you to send us your photos of Kosovo so we can share your special story with other readers on this page.

Don't be shy, just email them to info@prishtinainsight.com



1



2



3



4



5

1. In Kosovo we have this but also this.
2. No electricity and no water
3. Rubbish in the road
4. Learning by lamp
5. The road that children walk along to school. This is disease.

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Prishtina Insight

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