

SERBIA

DACIC TALKS WITH BOLSONARO, MORALES, ORBAN, NETANYAHU

BELGRADE, January 2 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic met with the newly elected president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, whose inauguration he attended in Brazil, and discussed bilateral relations and their further development, the Serbian Foreign Ministry stated on Jan. 2. Dacic had a series of meetings at the margins of the inauguration ceremony, with officials who attended, including Bolivian President Evo Morales, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Morocco Saadeddine Othmani, the speaker of the Russian Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The Serbian minister also met with the foreign ministers of Argentina, Angola, Peru, Suriname and Poland. Bolsonaro, 63, took office on Jan. 1, when he was sworn in, in the presence of numerous foreign officials. The new Brazilian president won the election thanks to the support of conservative and far-right voters, whom he had won over by promises to eradicate corruption and liberalize gun control. He won the run-off vote against the left-oriented Fernando Haddad, whose Workers' Party has won the previous four election cycles.

VUCIC SENDS TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCES TO PUTIN AFTER ACCIDENT IN MAGNITOGORSK

BELGRADE, January 2 2019 (Beta) - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic sent a telegram of condolences on Jan. 2 to Russian President Vladimir Putin, after the accident in Magnitogorsk, in which he wrote that the news about this had saddened Serbia and that "the Serbian people sympathize with the pain of the brotherly Russian people." "Dear Mr. President, please accept my deepest condolences regarding the tragedy in Magnitogorsk. Please convey the expression of my deepest condolences to the victims' families and to those who are still searching for their loved ones, and wishes for a quick recovery to the injured," reads the telegram of President Vucic. He also wrote that he was convinced the authorities of Russia and of the Chelyabinsk region, where Magnitogorsk is located, would "provide the victims' families with strong support" and that Serbia was ready to help in any way possible.

Serbian Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin sent a telegram of condolences to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. "At this moment, my thoughts and those of all members of the Defense Ministry and the Army of Serbia are with the Russian people, with the hope that the brave rescue teams would find the survivors of the tragedy," the telegram reads. The entrance of a ten-story building in Magnitogorsk collapsed in a gas explosion on Monday, Dec. 31. Rescue teams have so far extracted the bodies of nine victims from the debris. Five people were injured in the accident and more than 30 tenants of the building are still unaccounted for.

SOME 20,000 MIGRANTS PASS THROUGH CENTERS IN SERBIA IN 2018

BELGRADE, January 1 2019 (Beta) - Around 20,000 migrants passed through the centers of the Serbian Refugee and Migration Commissariat in 2018, while at the moment there are about 4,100 migrants in centers across the country, BETA learned. The Commissariat said between 100 and 200 migrants were voluntarily outside the centers, while the number of migrants inside

had increased with the onset of cold weather. "The Commissariat is completely ready for the rest of the winter," BETA was told. According to its records, the most numerous in the centers are migrants from Afghanistan, followed by those from Iran, Pakistan, Iraq and Bangladesh. The Commissariat added that 99 percent of migrants currently in Serbia wanted to continue on to a West European country. The Commissariat stressed that the time migrants spend in the centers varies, as some families spend years there, while others stay only briefly and attempt to leave Serbia illegally. The Commissariat said that there were 16 centers in Serbia, five asylums and 11 shelters, with a capacity of 6,000, noting that the biggest donor was the European Union.

ECONOMY

CADEZ: LARGE INVESTMENTS IN 2019

BELGRADE, January 2 2019 (Beta) - Large investments are expected in Serbia in 2019 that will mean a lot of new jobs for the population and high technology in production for the economy, Serbian Chamber of Commerce head Marko Cadez told BETA in an interview. "For the Serbian economy 2018 was a year of confirmed stability and sounder economic growth, rooted primarily in investment, foreign and domestic. That's a good foundation for higher export growth, so we can sell more and more of our products internationally this year and in the years to come," Cadez said. He stressed that Serbia's progress would also depend on the acceleration of structural reforms, primarily in the public sector – public enterprises, administration and public services, including the Tax Administration, and education and health care reform. According to him, it is of great benefit to the domestic economy that foreign and domestic investors have been made equal before the law, and that domestic companies are increasingly making use of state incentives for investment. "At the initiative of the [Chamber], domestic companies, like foreign ones, will in future be free of customs tariffs on the import of machinery from countries outside the EU, i.e. from countries with which we don't have zero tariffs, if they are an investment in starting capital. Also, more and more domestic companies, in addition to foreign ones, have been getting state subsidies over the past years, which is something the [Chamber] insisted on," Cadez said. On the topic of foreign investment, the head of the Chamber of Commerce said over 50 projects had been concluded, launched or arranged in 2018. "Foreign investors opened around 40 new plants, production lines and distribution centers in Serbia in 2019, which will hire almost 16,000 people. Additionally, the construction of 12 new big investments has begun or is in the works," Cadez said, stressing that German, Italian and Turkish investors were the most numerous. He pointed out that it was no longer a problem for Serbia to attract investors, the issue now was to secure enough highly qualified high-quality workers, which is why it was paramount for the education system to follow the needs of the economy. "Dual economy in high schools, through pilot projects we are realizing with the support of German, Austrian and Swiss partners has given results and since 2013 the number of pupils in the system has increased tenfold, from 400 to 4,500. These students are being schooled for 33 educational profiles in 80 schools, and 600 companies are involved in the dual education system," Cadez said.