

SERBIA**POPOVIC, CHEPURIN ANNOUNCE NUMEROUS AGREEMENTS TO BE SIGNED DURING PUTIN'S VISIT**

BELGRADE, 10 January 2019 (Beta) - Serbian Minister of Innovation and Technological Development Nenad Popovic and Russian Ambassador Alexander Chepurin announced on Jan. 10 that during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Serbia next week a number of important treaties would be signed, the Serbian cabinet has said in a statement. The statement said that at the Jan. 10 meeting Popovic and Chepurin "stressed their satisfaction with the numerous and important agreements that the two countries will sign," but did not give any further details. Popovic said that Serbia saw Russia as one of its most important strategic partners and that Russia always extended its strongest support for Serbia's key state and national interests and those of the Serb people. "Russia is supporting us in preserving our territorial integrity concerning Kosovo as well as preserving Republika Srpska," Popovic said. Popovic and Chepurin said that in addition to great potential for cooperation in the areas of energy and trade, there was potential in the areas of innovation, technological development and the digital economy, which, the statement said "will definitely be one of the most important subjects" of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's talks with Vladimir Putin.

KUBUROVIC MEETS WITH AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR

BELGRADE, 10 January 2019 (Beta) - The Australian ambassador to Serbia, Helena Studdert, on Jan. 10 praised the cooperation of Serbia's judicial bodies with Australia in the case of the arrest and prosecution of three Australians, whose extradition Australia sought for possession and trafficking in narcotics, the Serbian Justice Ministry stated on Jan. 10. Studdert and Serbian Justice Minister Nela Kuburovic discussed the improvement of judicial cooperation between the two countries. The officials concurred that Belgrade and Canberra had good relations and that international legal cooperation was good, but needed to be improved through a bilateral agreement.

START OF SERBIA'S FINAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

BELGRADE, 10 January 2019 (Beta) - The final negotiations on the signing of a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, consisting of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, which is to be signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's Jan. 17 visit to Serbia, began in Belgrade on Jan. 10. BETA learned at the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications that a good portion of the text had been harmonized during the earlier rounds of talks and that it remained for experts to reach agreement on six tariff groups. Minister of Trade Rasim Ljajic told BETA earlier that they were tariff groups of products important for Serbia - certain types of cheese, poultry, alcoholic beverages, sugar, cigarettes and automobiles. He said then that he wanted for the agreement to be more balanced, "without anomalies" which had existed at the time of the agreement's initiation. "For example, cigarettes exported from Serbia to Russia are subject to an 18-percent customs fee, while there are no customs fees for cigarettes imported from Russia. There are other similar cases and we wish to balance that," Ljajic said. He said that Serbia would probably not be granted all the benefits it

was requesting. "These are five countries which have to agree and each is protecting its own production," Ljajic said, stressing that Serbia would do everything to expand the list of products for customs-free exports to the Eurasian Economic Union. If the agreement is signed by Jan. 17, it will open a market of 180 million people for Serbia. The agreement, Ljajic added, will not jeopardize trade with the European Union because, until it becomes an EU member, Serbia has the right to sign trade agreements with whoever its wants.

GOV'T ADOPTS REGULATION ON CONDITIONS, METHOD OF ATTRACTING INVESTMENT IN FOOD PRODUCTION

BELGRADE, 10 January 2019 (Beta) - On Jan. 10 the Serbian government adopted a Regulation on the Conditions and Method of Attracting Direct Investment in the Area of Producing Food Items, the government's information service has said. The regulation was passed at the initiative of the Council for GDP Growth and pertains to awarding subsidies for equipment and technology for a higher level of processing in the food industry. It said that establishing a plan of state aid in the area of the food industry, through offering financial support, would enable the development and implementation of programs for purchasing new equipment and technology for the food industry. "According to the aforementioned, the achievement of goals envisaged by the Action Plan for conducting the Development Strategy for the Food Industry in Serbia from 2017-2022 will be expedited, by opening new jobs and raising the level of know-how and skill of employees in the food industry. The adoption of the regulation creates an environment for faster economic growth, equal regional development, raising exports and the increased competitiveness of this area," the statement said. A Resolution on Adopting an Agreement between the Serbian Government and the EU on Serbia's participation in the Erasmus Plus Program: The EU's Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sports, was adopted at the session. The resolution creates conditions for full participation in the program, which will enable the drawing of more funds for developing education and supporting youth, while educational institutions, companies, NGOs and all other organizations interested in participating in the program will be eligible for the funds.