

UK businessman become Dubai's new homeless

DUBAI CONTINUED FROM P1

"Now I think I'd be better off in prison," he said. "At least I'd have food and a roof over my head and I could do my time and be deported."

He said he had tried to turn himself in to police, but they told him he was free to go.

"If someone told me last year I'd end up sleeping rough, I wouldn't have believed them," he added.

A spokesman for Emirates NBD, the bank Warner had an account with, said officials had tried to settle the case in an amicable manner.

"The bank had no option but to apply the due process of the law and hand the matter over to the relevant authorities," a spokesman said.

"Emirates NBD sympathizes with customers who find themselves in a debt default situation, and makes every effort to help them resolve the matter in a manner that is mutually acceptable."

In February it emerged that Safi Qureshi, a British-born businessman who bought the man-made island of "England" in the offshore "World" development in Dubai, was in jail over a bounced check worth tens of millions of dollars.

However, thousands of cases go by unreported as the emirate suffers its deepest downturn in its history.

Radha Stirling set up a U.K. charity called Detained in Dubai to handle the growing number of expatriates who are facing jail in the emirate over financial crimes.

She said that she now receives around five calls a day from residents facing the threat of jail. The typical story is that a loss of employment leads to bank accounts being frozen, passports confiscated, and eventually jail.

"They don't envisage that a default is possible and believe their employment is stable," Stirling said.

"When they get into trouble, they realize the banks can actually prevent them from obtaining further employment and lead them into a full default."

Aside from the advice to avoid debt at all costs, Stirling has a warning to those who find themselves in trouble.

"If you lose your job or think there is a chance you won't be able to meet your commitments, leave the country as a matter of urgency, as the results of staying can involve a prison sentence," she said.

British PM wants to replace big government with volunteers

BRITAIN CONTINUED FROM P1

Volunteering, philanthropy, and some C\$636 million stuck in dormant bank and building society accounts are intended to fund this radical big society initiative. Eventually, start-up funds will be available through a big society bank that will be matched by private investment.

The PM says he wants the big society "to help people feel free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities."

He said the funds would help people stop being "passive recipients of state help" and would help turn neighbourhoods into "communities with oomph."

There is some concern that not all voluntary groups will have people of such calibre and will need local or national government officials to guide and support them.

Ed Miliband, who is contending for the Labour Party leadership, is critical of the big society plan. On the BBC radio "World At One" program he said the government was renegeing on its responsibilities.

Miliband said it is untrue that a big government bureaucracy was strangling local volunteer societies and that there were more people volunteering now than in the past.

New gas deal makes Bulgaria more dependent on Russia

By KREMENA KRUMOVA
Epoch Times Staff

SOFIA, Bulgaria—After 24 hours of tense negotiations between Bulgarian and Russian officials on Saturday, an agreement was signed paving the way for the transport of 63.15 billion cubic metres of Russian natural gas to South and Central Europe.

The agreement, which outlines a roadmap for the South Stream gas pipeline project, is expected to usher in a new era of Bulgarian dependence on Russia and was greeted with mixed reactions in Bulgaria.

Volen Siderov, leader of the nationalist political party, Ataka, the main coalition partner of the ruling centre-right GERB Party, has publicly praised Bulgaria's involvement in the South Stream project.

However, Bulgarian democrats from the Blue Coalition are opposed to it.

Ivan Ivanov, MP with the rightist Democrats for Strong Bulgaria Party, says Russia's goal is to engage all participants in the South Stream project as quickly as possible. The other countries on the pipeline are Greece, Italy, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria.

The reason, says Ivanov, is the recent intensified work on the Nabucco gas project launched by the European Union. The project is a rival to South Stream, aiming to lessen European dependence on Russian energy.

A second reason is the discovery and exploitation of large amounts of schist gas by the United States. The U.S. has now outpaced Russia, producing 201 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year.

"I think that the South Stream continues to be a political project with an unclear future," Ivanov said.

Ivanov said he learned from Richard Morningstar, special envoy of the U.S. Secretary of State for Eurasian Energy, that South Stream will cost between C\$35 billion and \$40.38 billion, making it the world's most expensive energy project.

"The main weakness for us Bulgarians is that South Stream does not do any good to lessen the energy dependence of our country. In practice, with this project our unilateral dependence on Russia continues," he said.

In exchange for engaging in the project, Bulgaria will receive lower prices for gas supplied from Moscow.

Russia also agreed to remove the three intermediary companies and let Bulgarian Bulgargaz buy directly

from Russian state-run gas company Gazprom.

At a press conference after signing the agreement, Traicho Traikov, Bulgarian Minister of Economy and Energy, said the new prices will come into force mid-2011 when the old agreement for delivery expires.

"The lowered prices are important for the people, [and] necessary for the economy. During the negotiations we didn't show off who is more stubborn, but showed care for the people. We want to enter the new heating season with new prices," Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borisov told reporters.

'The lowered prices are important for the people, [and] necessary for the economy.'

— Traicho Traikov, Bulgarian

Minister of Economy and Energy

"When Prime Minister Boiko Borisov announced that the negotiations have been tough and in the end Russia gave up and promised lower gas prices, my question is: What did Bulgaria give up then? Neither the premier nor the economy minister commented on this. I believe, we will find out the answer in the coming months or years," Ivanov said.

Energy Minister Traikov said that at present, Bulgaria earns \$104.35 million annually from the transit fees, expecting that the number would rise to \$6.26 billion with the South Stream project.

Russian counterpart Sergei Shmatko added that he was pleased with the results from the negotiations and pointed out that for Russia it is important to stay in the Bulgarian market.

The Bulgarian leg of South Stream is estimated



PRESS TALK: Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov speaks on July 6 during a news conference with Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borisov after a meeting in Sofia. Bulgaria and Russia signed the road map of the South Stream gas pipeline project on July 17. NIKOLAY DOYCHINOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

to cost \$871.25 million, which will be shared equally by Bulgaria and Russia.

Bulgaria and Russia have a long history of mutual cooperation and dependence. Although the two countries were close allies during the Cold War, relations between them have

shifted with Bulgaria becoming a member of both NATO and the European Union.

Relations between the former allies are relatively friendly at present, but that can hinge on Bulgaria's dependence on Russian natural gas resources and its export market.

Press freedom eroding in Ukraine under new government

By ANDREY VOLKOV
Epoch Times Staff

KIEV, Ukraine—Press freedom has declined sharply in Ukraine since Russia-leaning President Viktor Yanukovich assumed power earlier this year. Reporters Without Borders says.

"We have concluded that it becomes more and more problematic in Ukraine to be an independent journalist," said Jean-François Julliard, Secretary General of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), at a press conference in Kiev on Wednesday.

Members of RSF had come to Ukraine to meet with journalists, officials, and parliamentarians in an investigation to assess the state of press freedom in the country.

Ever since Yanukovich took over the presidency in February there have been increased concerns regarding censorship of media and cases of physical attacks and harassment of journalists.

Several television channels that used to pursue an independent editorial policy have seen their broadcast frequencies being cut off.

Journalists complain that the government has become less responsive and there are few open meetings with the press.

The increasingly difficult circumstances journalists now face marked the end of an improvement trend in press freedom over the last few years.

Former Ukrainian President



PRESS FREEDOM: Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich speaks in front of a screen displaying his image during a press conference devoted to the hundred days of his presidency in Kyiv on June 4. SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Victor Yushchenko had allowed media to become increasingly more independent and critical towards the authorities. This, in turn, led the media to express excessive criticism of him—now that they had the freedom to do so.

According to media experts, one of the reasons for concern is that owners of Ukrainian media companies want to be loyal to the government.

"All this naturally reflects on the country's information space which has been providing much less criticism of the current government, less opinion of opposition forces and more compliments," Victoria Sumar, director of Kiev Mass Media

Institute, said in a report.

Valeriy Khoroshkovskiy, head of the national security service, has been appointed by the president as member of High Council of Justice and given the responsibility for investigating censorship. This raised concerns about the integrity of his research.

"Yanukovich must make a public statement to reassure that he wants to protect press freedom in Ukraine and will do his best," said Julliard.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian authorities continue to insist that they are committed to democracy, with the main tactic of the current government being to "ignore criticism and proposals," said Sumar.

Subscribe to

The Epoch Times today!

Did you know that you can receive The Epoch Times anywhere in British Columbia delivered to your mailbox?

Subscribe today, and don't miss a single edition.

The Epoch Times is an independent newspaper. Your subscriptions will help us to expand our resources and bring you more of the kind of non-sensational, quality news that you have come to expect from us!

Subscription Rates 2010

Call Now! 604-439-9777

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Payment Options

VISA/Mastercard (over the phone)

Cheque

(Payable to The Epoch Times / \$20 charge for NSF cheques)

Mailing Address: 210 - 5481 Kingsway, Burnaby BC V5H 2G1

13 weeks
\$20.80

26 weeks
\$39.00

52 weeks
\$72.80