

## Balkans: Kosovo and Albania intensify cooperation

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Pristina: Visiting Albanian prime minister Sali Berisha and his Kosovo host Hashim Thaci on Tuesday signed several bilateral agreements which will facilitate movement of people and goods between the two countries and promote customs and border police cooperation.

Albania has also ceded to Kosovo the Adriatic port of Shendjin, thus giving the newly independent state an exit to the sea.

"The port of Shendjin is now a Kosovo exit to the sea," Berisha said after the signing ceremony in the capital Pristina.

On his second visit to Kosovo since the country gained independence from Serbia last year, Berisha said "There are no two Albanian nations and a national ideal of Albanians must be a European ideal".

Berisha and Thaci also signed agreements in regard to the legalisation of status of the people which have illegally settled in the two countries.

After the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo in 1999, the province was put under United Nations control and many Albanian citizens have since illegally settled in Kosovo.

Berisha was scheduled to meet with Kosovar president Fatmir Sejdiu, as well as special European Union envoy Peter Feith and other international officials in the newly proclaimed state.

More than sixty countries, including the United States and leading EU members have recognised Kosovo's independence, but Belgrade is fighting a diplomatic battle to retain the control over its former province.

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