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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo Assembly to hold extraordinary session on Dehari today (*media*)**

All media report that the Kosovo Assembly will hold an extraordinary session today to discuss the case of Vetevendosje activist Astrit Dehari who was found dead in his cell at the Prizren Detention Centre. ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that the session was scheduled with the signatures of 40 MPs from the ruling parties, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). Representatives of the opposition said that the Assembly presidency has ignored the petition signed by over 23,000 citizens. The petition called for discussions on the Dehari case and for the resignations of Justice Minister Dhurata Hoxha and Interior Minister Skender Hyseni. Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, said on Monday that the petition was not addressed to the Assembly presidency and that it did not call for an extraordinary session. Pristina-based news website ***Indeksonline*** reports that civil society organisations will hold a protest in front of the Assembly building at 10:00 with the following demands: an independent and transparent investigation into Dehari’s death, the resignations of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Interior Affairs and the immediate prosecution of those in state institutions that failed to provide security for Dehari and the dismissal of officials for an undignified treatment of Dehari at the detention centre following his death.

**Ruling parties agree on next year’s budget (*Kosova Sot/RFE*)**

Ruling coalition parties – the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) – have managed to harmonise stances regarding the 2017 budget expected to be voted at the Assembly by the end of the year, ***Radio Free Europe*** reported. Finance Deputy Minister Isni Kilaj, PDK official, said agreement has been reached on demands they as a party presented. “The budget will definitely be approved,” Kilaj said.

**Thaci and Mustafa condemn killing of Russian Ambassador (*Kosovapress*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi condemned the killing of the Russian Ambassador in Turkey, Andrey Karlov. “I strongly condemn the terrible terrorist attack on the Russian Ambassador to Ankara,” Thaçi wrote on his Twitter account. The Prime Minister of Kosovo, Isa Mustafa also condemned the attack. “The government of Kosovo condemns the attack on the Russian Ambassador in Turkey. Condolences to all,” Mustafa wrote on his Twitter account.

**Tahiri: Dialogue is helping to extend institutions in the north (*Epoka*)**

The Minister for Dialogue, Edita Tahiri, met on Monday with students of the Winter University for security studies, organized by Kosovo Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (KYATA). On her lecture about Kosovo’s state-building history, Tahiri said that during the six years of dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia a considerable success was achieved. According to her, more than thirty agreements were reached and majority of them are being implemented. “The results of this dialogue are helping integration of Serbs from northern part of Kosovo. Dialogue is also helping to extend Kosovo institutions in the northern part and dissolve the parallel structures there,” Tahiri said.

**Serbian List’s unity is broken (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on page three that unity within the Serbian List has been broken after the dismissal of Minister Ljubomir Maric. Prime Minister Isa Mustafa decided to dismiss Maric after he was seen accompanying Marko Djuric during his recent illegal visit to Kosovo. Mirjana Jevtic, who was appointed as Minister for Local Government, started work on Tuesday and her decision has reportedly irritated the Serbian List. According to the paper, there are two political groups within the Serbian List: one group is led by Marko Djuric, head of the Serbian government’s office for Kosovo, and the other group is led by Aleksandar Vulin, Serbia’s former representative for Kosovo. According to Serbian media, Mirjana Jevtic is a member of Vulin’s political party. The paper further notes following Maric’s dismissal, Serbs have started accusing each other of “cooperating with Albanians” and “breaking the unity among Serbs”.

**Civic Action Initiative to protest against wall in Mitrovica (*RTK*)**

The Civic Action Initiative will organize today a symbolic action in front of the government of Kosovo to protest against the recently-built wall in Mitrovica and Isa Mustafa, Edita Tahiri and Agim Bahtiri. According to the Civic Initiative, “the Kosovo government has failed to defend and represent the country’s interests in the Brussels talks with Serbia, and has agreed to the wall which divides Mitrovica, legalizes Serbian power in the north, the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities and demarcation”.

**Government unaware of construction for ASM in the north (*Indeksonline*)**

The news website recalls that several days ago, the former chairman of the committee for the north at the Mitrovica municipal assembly, Vesel Neziri, said that around 200 metres from the recently-built wall near the Ibar Bridge, Serbs have started building another construction, destined reportedly for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. Kosovo government officials however are unaware of the construction. The news website contacted the government’s media office, who said the question should be addressed to the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning. “On concrete issues you should address the two respective ministries because they have conducted inspections several days ago,” a government spokesman said. Kosovo’s Minister for Dialogue, Edita Tahiri, also said that such constructions are in the competencies of the Ministry for Environment and that the building was not part of the Brussels agreement on the Association/Community. A press officer at the Ministry for Environment told ***Indeksonline*** that they are unaware of the construction and that it is not within their competencies.

**Selimi: Investigations should be completed (*Epoka*)**

The paper carries an extensive interview with former director of Kosovo Police, Behar Selimi, in which he appeals for the local and international politics not to interfere in Monday’s police action where 59 police officers were arrested under the suspicion for corruption. He said that justice should go all the way to the end with this case, despite reactions. Selimi admitted that there were cases of police officers involved in corruption during the time that he was director, however, according to him, that was a time illegalities were defended by politics, especially the international one. Selimi denied the possibility that this case could ruin the good image of Kosovo Police.

**Israeli tycoon – a shareholder in Ferronikeli in Kosovo, arrested (*Express*)**

Israeli tycoon Beny Steinmetz, one of the shareholders of “Ferronikel” in Kosovo, was arrested by Israeli police on Monday for his suspected role a sprawling corruption case involving tens of millions of dollars. “Ferronikeli” mine in Kosovo, Drenas municipality, is owned by “Benny Steinmetz Group Resources Ltd” (BSG) and “International Mineral Resources” (IMR), owned by Alexander Mashkevich, a Kazak Hebrew, who is also citizen of Israel. Israeli online newspaper “Haaretz” writing about the case, did not specify whether Beny is also owner of “Ferronikeli”. Steinmetz is suspected of bribing officials in Guinea and of money laundering. His house and offices were raided Monday morning, police said. He was sentenced in absentia to two weeks house arrest by an Israeli court. His Israeli and French passports were confiscated and he is barred from leaving Israel for 180 days. His bail was put at 50 million shekel in cash and an additional 50 million shekel in properties ($25.86 million). He will be able to post bail in three days. The businessman owns a mining company that had won mining rights in Guinea. Steinmetz and other Israelis are suspected of paying out tens of millions in bribes to officials in Conakry, capital of the Republic of Guinea, in return for their help in prompting local businesses interests. The investigation is being conducted together with law enforcement officials from the United States, Switzerland and Guinea, as part of a global push led by the OECD to address official corruption in member states. In Israel, the police’s fraud squad is working with state prosecutors and local tax officials. The probe was made public on Monday after a covert investigation found evidence supporting the suspicions, police said. Others are expected to be called in for questioning as the investigation continues. Mining company BSG Resources earlier said in a statement that Steinmetz’s arrest was “in the aftermath of ongoing and what BSGR believes to be obsolete investigations surrounding bribery and corruption against BSGR.” The firm added it believed the allegations to be baseless. Steinmetz’s lawyer denied the allegations. The attorney, Yuval Sasson, said “the current process is a recycling of an old process led by the Guinean government since its corrupt president Alpha Conde rose to power, with the aim of illegally confiscating BSGR’s mining rights. “There have been continuous and baseless attempts aimed at camouflaging acts of corruption with the aim of illegal confiscation of assets,” Sasson said. Steinmetz was recently said to be embroiled in another corruption story in Africa as part of a clash with competitors. According to foreign reports covering the story, Steinmetz’s competitor spent millions to create conspiracy against him and prevent one of his subsidiaries from winning a coveted contract.

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