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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Slavko Simic dismissed from post of Serbian List leader (*Zeri/Klan Kosova*)**

***Zeri*** reports that the recent dismissal of Ljubomir Maric from the post of Minister of Local Government and Administration has caused “an earthquake” within the Serbian List with the latest development including the dismissal of the party leader, Slavko Simic. The decision was taken by 6 out of 11 Serbian List MPs, Serbian media reported. Simic is being accused of secretly coordinating with Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa Maric’s dismissal. The Serbian List will from now be led by Sasa Milosavljevic. However, ***Klan Kosova*** reported that Simic has refused to recognise the decision for his dismissal calling it “a mission impossible.” He said the signatures in favour of his dismissal include those of two MPs who are not part of the Serbian List.

**Kosovo Assembly to vote on next year’s budget today (*Kosova Sot*)**

The Kosovo Assembly is scheduled to hold a plenary session today to discuss the draft law on 2017 budget. The chairman of the Assembly’s commission for budget and finance, Naser Osmani, confirmed today’s meeting. Earlier, media reported that the budget issue could be a reason for Kosovo heading to early elections as the two coalition partners – The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) – had different positions of the matter but most recently the parties announced they managed to harmonise the demands presented by the PDK.

**Border demarcation, next year (*Zeri*)**

Despite the efforts of Kosovo Prime Minister Isa Mustafa to ratify the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro this year, the paper reports that this is likely to be postponed for next year. Kosovo Assembly Vice President, Xhavit Haliti, said there would be no urgent session on the border demarcation issue. The same view was also expressed by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Nuredin Ibishi, who said he didn’t believe the agreement would be resubmitted to the legislators without any prior announcement. At the same time, opposition representatives insist on the agreement being redrafted before being put up for vote again.

**Turkish President Erdogan to receive President Thaci next week (*media*)**

Several news websites report that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will receive Kosovo President Hashim Thaci in Ankara next week. Erdogan said on Wednesday that he will discuss the issue of Kosovo with Thaci and added that Turkey would continue to support Kosovo’s bid to join international and regional organisations.

**Kosovo heading towards bankruptcy (*Zeri*)**

On the front page the paper warns that Kosovo could very well be headed for bankruptcy following the recent Court of Arbitration in Vienna ruling saying that the Kosovo Telecom has to pay €30 million in compensation to the virtual mobile operator Z-Mobile for breach of contract. In an unrelated case, the Government of Kosovo has to pay €5 million to an Austrian printing company for breach of contract. Furthermore, the Kosovo Government is facing another lawsuit from Axos for halting the privatization process of Kosovo Post and Telecom. Economy experts claim all these cases are a result of poor leadership on the part of the Kosovo Government.

**Kosovo keeps license for Serbia Telecom a secret (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its page that Kosovo’s authorities have decided to keep a secret the license which they gave to Serbia Telecom to operate with ten different activities in Kosovo. The paper reports that Kosovo’s Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communications (ARKEP) gave the authorisations to the Serbian operator on December 15 on the same day when the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) allocated the +383 code to Kosovo. Citing information from the Kosovo Business Registration Agency, the paper further notes that the Serbia Telecom unit in Kosovo will provide cable and wireless telecommunication, it will develop public services and energy projects, it will also set up construction installations, trade goods and conduct satellite telecommunication activities.

**“Early next year could bring new recognitions from Asia” (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo’s Ambassador to Australia, Sabri Kiçmari, said in an interview for the paper, that Australia is permanently engaged in helping Kosovo’s bid to join international organisations. He also spoke about his intensive engagement for recognition of Kosovo by Asian countries. Kiçmari said that early next year Kosovo could receive new recognitions from this continent.

**Svecla: Increased chances for VV-AKR coalition at central level (*Gazeta Metro*)**

The Vetevendosje Movement and the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) signed on Wednesday a coalition agreement for the local co-governance in Mitrovica South municipality. Xhelal Svecla, member of the Vetevendosje chairmanship, told the news website that the Vetevendosje Movement will bring better services to the people in Mitrovica. “For the time being, we cannot talk about coalitions at the central level. I believe both sides will discuss this when the time is right. But what I can say is that a coalition government at the local level will increase chances for cooperation at the central level too,” Svecla said. He also said: “we believe a united Mitrovica can become a reality only if there is honest engagement by the central institutions, something that is evidently lacking. But we also believe that a professional, brave and honest local government can contribute greatly to reaching this objective. We are confident that this result can be achieved by talking with the local Serbs and not with Belgrade in Brussels”.

**Austria keeps soldiers in Kosovo to prevent terrorism (*Insajderi*)**

***Derstarndart.at*** reported that Austria’s Minister of Defense, Hans Peter Doskozil sees Austria’s engagement in Kosovo as a way to prevent terrorism. He made this statement on Wednesday during his visit to the Austrian troops serving in Kosovo. 500 Austrian soldiers will remain in Kosovo. “You know what happened. Results of the recent days are a “wake up call” said the Minister refereeing to the terror in Berlin. He added that Kosovo is a sensitive region and that it is important to be present here. “The most important thing to prevent terrorism is to know what is going on,” he said.

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