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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci’s “delaying” consultations (*Koha Ditore*)**

The invitation of Kosovo President Hashim Thaci to leaders of parliamentary parties for a “consultative” meeting before the decision on when to call the Assembly’s constitutive session is seen as part of Thaci’s “delaying” tactics, the paper reports on the front page. The constitution of Kosovo stipulates that the President has to call the session within thirty days from the certification of election results but nowhere does it mention calling consultative meetings before doing so. Albert Krasniqi from the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) said: “Invitation for a meeting with representatives of parliamentary political parties only further delays the process of forming the institutions and as such is unnecessary”. Meanwhile, the paper reports that before sending out an invitation to the meeting, President Thaci was most recently seen meeting former colleagues from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) in Pristina cafes. After meeting PAN’s candidate for prime minister, Ramush Haradinaj, last week, Thaci was seen yesterday with PDK leader Kadri Veseli, Mayor of Skenderaj/Srbica Sami Lushtaku, and Rrahim Pacolli, former official of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) and brother to the party leader, Behgjet Pacolli. Thaci did not comment on the purpose of the meeting but the rest of the group said it was coincidental and they simply had a “morning coffee” together.

**Sejdiu: AKR is not joining PAN (*Zeri/Kallxo*)**

New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) deputy leader, Korab Sejdiu, dismissed reports that his party was getting closer to the PAN coalition as “fake news”. “There is no truth to this at all and there is no agreement with PAN waiting to be signed”, Sejdiu said.

**Berisha: PAN offered LDK prime minister’s post (*Telegrafi*)**

Member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and advisor to outgoing Prime Minister Isa Mustafa, Besnik Berisha, said in an interview to RTV Dukagjini that the PAN coalition led by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) offered the post of prime minister in exchange for LDK joining a coalition government. “LDK had the opportunity to take on the prime minister’s post but refused it,” Berisha said.

**Rakic: We will consult Belgrade about everything (*Lajmi*)**

The new leader of the Serbian List, Goran Rakic, said that the party that he leads will consult Belgrade on every action, just as Albanians are consulting foreign diplomats in Pristina for theirs. He said that they expect discussions with Albanian political leaders in order to decide whether they are going to be part of the government or not. He added that no decision will be made in a hastened manner and without Belgrade’s consent. He said that everyone is aware, including Albanian political leaders, that Serbs existence in Kosovo would not be possible without the government of Serbia. “We also often do not like the fact that Albanian leaders often bring decisions by consulting foreign diplomats. We cannot have an impact on this and they cannot change our relation with Belgrade either,” he said.

**Pence: Pristina Belgrade dialogue should continue (*Blic/Lajmi*)**

Based on the Serbian daily ***Blic***, ***Lajmi*** reports that U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence said that the United States of America is concerned about the Russian impact in the Balkans and added that the Russian humanitarian center in Nis should remain humanitarian. “The U.S. insists on the continuation of the dialogue with Pristina and in this sense more efforts are required from our side,” Pence reportedly told Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic during their meeting in Washington, DC. He added that he is aware that the matter is complicated, however he encouraged both parties to do their utmost to continue the discussions. Pence further said that the U.S. is focused on Serbia’s success to reach stability in the region.

**Hoxhaj: Kosovo has votes for UNESCO and Interpol (*RTK*)**

Kosovo’s Foreign Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, said Kosovo has enough votes to gain membership in UNESCO and Interpol. He said that securing favourable votes was one of his main objectives of his trips to Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. He said that it will be up to the new government to follow up on the issue but “I can say that Kosovo has the votes to be both part of UNESCO and Interpol”.

**U.S. State Department report: Islamist extremism growing in Kosovo (*Lajmi*)**

The State Department released on Wednesday its annual report, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, which provides the Department of State’s annual Congressionally-mandated assessment of trends and events in international terrorism that transpired from January 1 to December 31, 2016. “The threat of violent Islamist extremism has been growing in Kosovo, assisted in part by funding from foreign organizations that preach extremist ideologies and violent extremist groups actively using social media to spread propaganda and recruit followers. Approximately 315 foreign terrorist fighters from Kosovo have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS or al-Nusrah Front (al-Qa’ida’s affiliate in Syria), of which approximately 58 have been killed. The Government of Kosovo is implementing a comprehensive strategy and action plan for countering violent extremism (CVE). The Kosovo Police (KP) Counterterrorism Directorate is enhancing its investigative capacities by increasing personnel and developing a cyber-counterterrorism unit,” is noted in the report.

**Mitrovica North does not implement Kosovo laws (*Lajmi*)**

According to Kosovo’s General Auditor, Mitrovica North municipality is not implementing the laws endorsed by the Assembly of Kosovo. This municipality still operates with a UNMIK Instruction which is in contradiction with Kosovo’s applicable laws. “The municipality is not implementing the Law on Property Taxes and Law on Constructions,” the report of the National Audit Office for Mitrovica North stressed. "The Municipality still collects revenues based on a decision from UNMIK’s time. Moreover, this decision does not foresee revenues from property tax, construction permits, the use of public properties or other sources of municipal revenues,” the report of the National Audit Office states.

**President Thaci offers KSF’s help to countries battling fires (*RTK/Zeri*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, is reported to have offered assistance to Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia in battling fires that have been threatening the region in recent days. The offer was made following consultations with Kosovo Security Force (KSF) commander, Rrahman Rama.

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