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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Veseli: All PDK MPs to vote in favor of demarcation, except Hasani (*Express*)**

Kadri Veseli, leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), commented on the border demarcation agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro during an interview to ***Klan Kosova*** on Thursday. Veseli said all PDK MPs will vote in favor of the agreement, except for Nait Hasani. Veseli however said that even Hasani, who currently opposes the agreement, could change his mind in the end. “The border delineation with Montenegro is the biggest strategic interest of the Republic of Kosovo. Failing to delineate the border will only give more room for Serbia and Russia to manipulate the situation. The border demarcation must happen as soon as possible. We [PDK] would vote in favor of demarcation regardless of whether we would be in government or in the opposition. Any delay will not change the situation it will prolong Kosovo’s agony and isolation,” Veseli said.

**Border demarcation commission claims to have secured new information (*Zeri*)**

Members of the border demarcation commission said they are finalizing their report which is expected to be published by the government of Kosovo, the paper reports on the front page. Florim Isufi, member, said the commission has managed to secure new information regarding the Kosovo-Montenegro border but did not specify what these include. “We have received new elements that we will include in the report and most probably the government will publish it. There are new if not surprising things,” Isufi told the paper.

**Darmanovic: For Montenegro, demarcation issue is closed (*Koha*)**

Montenegro’s Foreign Minister, Srdjan Darmanovic, told Pristina-based ***KTV*** on Thursday that for Montenegro, the issue of the border demarcation with Kosovo is a closed issue and that the agreement is now Kosovo’s internal matter. “We have done our part, because this is how it works with international agreements. Demarcation is now an internal matter for Kosovo. The Parliament of Montenegro has never before annulled an international agreement, and it won’t happen now,” Darmanovic said. “Montenegro has trust in the democratic capacity of Kosovo’s institutions and we have no interest whatsoever in putting pressure over this matter”.

**Pacolli offers Serbia share in decision-making in Kosovo (*Koha*)**

The Kosovo government has not distanced itself from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli’s offer to Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic to decide jointly on Mitrovica North becoming a free trade zone, the paper reports on the front page. Pacolli and Dacic both attended a conference in Washington on “A storm is coming? Shaping the future of the Balkans in an era of insecurity”. Pacolli was quoted as saying, “Kosovo is a young state, we are open for private partnerships and for free trade zones. Dacic, let us make Mitrovica North a free trade zone, because only by creating new jobs we can reduce the influence of politics”. Imer Mushkolaj, publicist and political analyst, told the paper that Pacolli’s offer was hasty and even dangerous. “The northern part of Kosovo is practically governed by Belgrade and such an offer to create a free trade zone there would only strengthen Serbia’s influence there,” Mushkolaj said. The paper contacted Pacolli to get more information about his offer but received no reply. Meanwhile, Halil Matoshi, advisor to Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, said Pacolli’s idea is not an offer for co-governance to Serbia, “because Kosovo’s institutions have full jurisdiction throughout the territory. Deputy Prime Minister Pacolli’s statement has to do with the moral support that Belgrade needs to give Kosovo Serbs to improve their well-being”.

**Pacolli: Russian influence can be felt in Kosovo (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli, who is visiting the U.S., told ***Voice of America*** on Thursday that “the reality is that everyone in Kosovo and Serbia wants to build a better life and future for themselves and their families”. Pacolli was commenting on his offer to Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic to make Mitrovica North a free trade zone. Asked to comment on allegations for Russian influence in Balkans and mainly in Kosovo, Pacolli said, “we had a meeting today, the ministers of the Western Balkans with the security advisor to the U.S. President, and we discussed Russian influence in the region. Every one of us, including Mr. Dacic, said that the absence of the United States of America in the region has perhaps created more room for Russia. I would like to see an increased U.S. presence in the Balkans and in our country, both in terms of security and economy. With this growing presence of the U.S. and the West, there will be less room for Russia’s influence … We feel Russia’s influence mostly in the media. The media later influence actions that Serbia makes against Kosovo.”

**Serwer: Kosovo is not an ideal place for permanent military presence (RTK)**

The U.S. expert on Kosovo, Daniel Serwer, reacted to the recommendations of the Atlantic Council for a permanent U.S. presence in Balkans, respectively Camp Bondsteel. “I would be prepared to consider a permanent US military presence in Southeastern Europe, but I can’t agree that “Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo is ideal for the purpose.” It is not. It lacks the 10,000-foot runway that a serious US base would require, and building one would be difficult given the topography. There is also no need for one, since an F-16 doesn’t know much difference between Aviano (in northern Italy) and Bondsteel. More important: a US base anywhere should serve US purposes, which are heavily focused on the Middle East and North Africa. We’ve got bases much closer to those theaters than Bondsteel. The Pentagon has long wanted to close Bondsteel, because it doesn’t serve US purposes well. Nor do I think we can assume that we will always be welcome in Kosovo. Young Kosovar Albanians don’t understand why the country doesn’t have an army. NATO is starting to be seen as a barrier to getting one, and Bondsteel in particular plays looms large in that regard: some internationals don’t think Kosovo needs an army because it has a NATO presence. That won’t fly forever with the country’s citizens. Better to fix the problem than wait for them to protest,” Serwer wrote.

**LDK and PDK appeal to ECAP (*Zeri/Bota Sot*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) have contested mayoral election results in a number of municipalities and appealed to the Elections Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). In a statement to the press, LDK said it submitted four complaints to ECAP regarding election results in the municipalities of Pristina, Kamenica and Dragash. At the same time, PDK has filed three complaints for Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Klina. Blerand Stavileci from the PDK, said they plan to exhaust all possible legal ways to “put the will of the people in place.” He said the party continues to insist on the recount of votes in the municipality of Prizren and that they possess evidence showing that the election process was manipulated there.

**Social networks, main propaganda “weapon” by extremist groups (*media*)**

Several media report that the Pristina-based Kosovo Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) published on Thursday a report titled “New Battlegrounds – Extremist Groups’ Activity on Social Networks in Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia”. The report notes that online platforms such as Facebook and Youtube were widely used for propaganda to convince different individuals, especially youths, to support different fighting groups in Syria and Iraq. The report also notes that a certain number of individuals, although they did not join different fighting formations in war zones, they became part of the propaganda through social media.

**Kosovo power consumers not to be charged for unpaid bills in the north (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on the front page that electricity bills for the month of December are expected to be about 3.5 percent lower as a result of the Energy Regulatory Office ordering the relevant power companies to remove from the bills the cost of energy used by residents in the north of Kosovo. The regulatory office said the rest of consumers should not be charged for unpaid electricity in the north and that the decision will remain in place until a court rules on the matter.

**Limaj to seek compensation from courts (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA), Fatmir Limaj, is planning to seek compensation from the courts for being subjected to an eight-year trial which ended in him being acquitted of all organised crime and corruption charges. Limaj’s lawyer, Tahir Rrecaj, said in an interview to Arbresh.info web portal that they are waiting to see whether the prosecution will appeal the ruling against Limaj and if not, they could file lawsuit seeking compensation or expand the existing one on Klecka case, where Limaj was also acquitted.

**NGO organizes forum on normalization of Kosovo-Serbia relations (*RTK*)**

AKTIV, a Mitrovica North-based non-governmental organization, will organizes today a forum titled “Process of normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia”. The forum will have two panels that will discuss the content of the comprehensive agreement for normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia and integration of the north of Kosovo in the system, as condition for Serbia’s and Kosovo’s European integration.

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