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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo’s Thaci and Serbia’s Vucic meet in Davos (*dailies*)**

Papers report of a meeting yesterday between President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, and President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic at the sidelines of the World Economic Forum taking place in Davos, Switzerland. Thaci wrote on Facebook after the meeting that they discussed continuing dialogue for normalization of relations and “the need to reach a historic agreement between the two countries.” Thaci said this would be the only way to maintain peace and open European perspective for the entire Western Balkans.

**Kosovo’s Ambassador to U.S. responds to Vucic’s remarks on dialogue (*media*)**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Thursday in Davos, Switzerland, that “if dialogue on normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina means us having to recognize Kosovo as independent – then thanks bye”. Kosovo’s Ambassador to the United States, Vlora Citaku, responded to Vucic’s remarks through a Twitter post. “OK, bye,” Citaku tweeted.

**Thaci: Hahn reconfirmed Kosovo’s certain European perspective (*Epoka*)**

The President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, met at the World Economic Forum in Davos with the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Johannes Hahn. “The European Union Commissioner for Enlargement and European policy for enlargement, Johannes Hahn, reconfirmed to me during a meeting in Davos the certain perspective of European integration of Kosovo, just that of the other countries of Western Balkans. He guaranteed that this certain perspective will be reflected also in the EU Enlargement Strategy for Western Balkans countries,” Thaci said.

**Thaci: Kosovo supports international justice (*Bota Sot*)**

During his stay in Davos, Switzerland for the annual World Economic Forum, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci was asked by a group of Serb journalists what was happening in the Assembly of Kosovo regarding the initiative to abrogate the law on specialist chambers. Thaci replied: “We work very closely with the Tribunal in The Hague. Kosovo also supports international justice. We have nothing to hide, we fulfill our duties and will work very closely with international community.”

**Apostolova: Repealing specialist court damages Kosovo’s credibility (*Kallxo*)**

Head of the EU Office in Kosovo and Special Representative, Nataliya Apostolova, said in an interview to “Jeta ne Kosove” show that if the initiative to abrogate law on specialist chambers is approved by the Assembly of Kosovo, it will have consequences on Kosovo’s EU integration process. “It is very important for the people of Kosovo, through their elected representatives at the Assembly, to know what can come as a result is this motion continues and the law is abrogated and what can be the consequences for Kosovo’s credibility as EU partner,” Apostolova said. She added that the specialist chambers are not limited to the ethnic background of the persons it will indict. “It is not based on ethnicity,” she stressed. With regards to visa liberalisation, Apostolova said it is up to the Assembly of Kosovo to resolve the issue. She also called on political parties to think twice if they really wish to keep the youth and common people hostage “because of individual interests of a small political party.” She also spoke about the security situation in the north after the murder of Serb politician, Oliver Ivanovic. “First of all, I of course think that it is the responsibility also of the mayors, local governance, including authorities of the national level of Kosovo, to seriously pay major attention to the situation in the north,” Apostolova said.

**EU: Demarcation agreement or isolation (*Zeri*)**

European Union has reemphasized the need for Kosovo to meet the two remaining criteria before being granted visa liberalisation: ratify the border demarcation agreement and improved track record of fight against corruption. In a written response to the paper, the EU Office in Kosovo said that ratification of the border agreement would be a clear sign that the Assembly of Kosovo was working in the interest of the people of Kosovo. “Agreement should be ratified without delays as an issue of common interest to stop self-isolation of Kosovo,” the EU said.

**Montenegro does not change position on demarcation (*Koha*)**

On the eve of Montenegro President Dusko Markovic’s visit to Pristina, Montenegrin officials said that the border demarcation with Kosovo is a closed issue for them regardless of Pristina’s efforts to draft a joint statement on the matter. “As far as demarcation is concerned, Montenegro maintains the same position,” an advisor to President Markovic said when asked if possible solutions are being discussed. The paper recalls that Montenegro’s Foreign Minister Zoran Pazin made the same statement during an earlier meeting with his Kosovo counterpart. Senior government officials in Podgorica have repeatedly stated that demarcation is a closed issue. Pazin even called on the government in Pristina to announce an official position on the matter. Kosovo government officials confirmed that Montenegro’s Prime Minister will visit Kosovo on February 6 but did not provide further details.

**Hoxhaj: Kosovo’s balanced approach for new EU enlargement strategy (*Epoka*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, met on Thursday with the Ambassadors of the EU member countries, accredited in Pristina, to inform them about the agenda of the government of Kosovo for this year. He requested from the European Union to have a more balanced approach for Kosovo in the new Strategy for Western Balkans. He expressed his concern that in the most recent versions of this document which is expected to be published soon, there is no clear language on Kosovo, after implementation of SAA and European Reform Agenda compare to the other countries which have a clear timeframe. Hoxhaj requested that after the conclusion of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, both countries to be rewarded the same.

**Kosovo Assembly to hold plenary session today (*media*)**

Most online media report that the Kosovo Assembly will hold a plenary session today. MPs will discuss and vote on several draft law amendments, the selection of a candidate for a non-executive member of the Kosovo Central Bank Board and the motion on Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj who has been asked by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) to inform MPs about the firing of arms by Deputy Prime Minister and Environment and Spatial Planning Minister, Dardan Gashi.

**PM Haradinaj fails to show up at his Assembly interpellation (*Zeri/Kosova Sot*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, did not take show up for the interpellation called by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) regarding the use of weapons by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Diaspora and Strategic Investment, Dardan Gashi. LDK said Haradinaj’s absence is an irresponsible act as he is constitutionally required to attend interpellations. Haradinaj at the time of the session was paying a visit to the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane.

**Opposition calls PM Haradinaj for a motion on increase of salaries (*Epoka*)**

The Parliamentary Group of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), has submitted today the request for motion of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, with regards to the Decision of the government, number 04/20, dated 21.12.2017, on increase of salaries for the governing cabinet. “Such decision is extremely harmful, not analyzed and creates a major discrepancy between the incomes of the citizens, incomes of the other employees in the public sector and the officials of the governing cabinet. With this decision, the difference between the salaries of the governing cabinet and a civil servant increase from 1 with 4 to 1 with eight. This discrepancy is much bigger for those who receive pensions or social welfare, or the salary of those working in the private sector,” notes LDK’s press release. “Therefore, based on the abovementioned, MPs of the LDK Parliamentary Group, through this motion, will request from the Prime Minister immediate annulment of the illegal decision for salary increase to the governing cabinet as well as bringing for approval at the Assembly, in the shortest possible period of time, the Law on the salaries for the Public Sector,” concludes the communique. On Thursday, Albulena Haxhiu, Kosovo Assembly MP from the Vetevendosje Movement also submitted the request for Prime Minister’s motion on the decision for increase of salaries. She informed that this political party will submit the request to the Constitutional Court as well.

**Molliqaj: 99 percent chance Vetevendosje will split (*media*)**

Dardan Molliqaj, former organizational secretary of the Vetevendosje Movement (VV), said on Thursday he was deeply convinced that the VV will split up. In an interview to ***RTV Dukagjini***, Molliqaj said that until Thursday he had hoped that disagreements within the VV could be overcome but that he lost all hope after Albin Kurti’s interview to ***RTK*** during which according to Molliqaj he flirted with the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Kadri Veseli.

**40 activists leave Vetevendosje (*dailies*)**

Around 40 Vetevendosje activists, led by Teuta Rrusta and Nol Nushi, announced their resignations yesterday in a press conference saying the party has turned into a battleground for power. “We can no longer see ourselves here,” Rrusta said. Earlier, Vetevendosje issued a statement saying that Rrusta and Nushi were no longer employed by the party as their contracts within Vetevendosje secretariat had not been renewed.

**Ministers: Kosovo committed to fight terrorism (*Zeri*)**

Minister of Internal Affairs, Flamur Sefaj, and Minister of Justice, Abelard Tahiri, expressed the commitment of Kosovo institutions to continue fight against terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism. In a meeting, the two ministers reconfirmed Kosovo’s engagement in the coalition against the so-called Islamic State and they also spoke about reintegration of Kosovo citizens who have taken part in foreign conflicts.

**MPs call for dissolution of “criminal gangs” in the north (*media*)**

The Kosovo Intelligence Agency Director (AKI), Driton Gashi, briefed the Kosovo Assembly Oversight Committee on Thursday about the overall security situation in Kosovo. The briefing, which was held behind closed doors, came after the murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic in northern Kosovo. ***Koha Ditore*** reports that members of the oversight committee called on the AKI Director to step up the commitment and efficiency especially in the northern part of the country, following Ivanovic’s murder. MPs also called on law enforcement and security mechanisms to mobilize in dissolving what they called “criminals gangs” in the north. Committee chairman, Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, told reporters after the meeting that investigations into Ivanovic’s murder are ongoing and that earlier reports about possible unrest in the north are ungrounded. ***Klan Kosova*** covers the meeting under the headline ***No threat from riots in the north***.

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