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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kocijancic: Enlargement strategy includes the entire Balkans (*RTK*)**

Maja Kocijancic, Spokesperson to the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security, said the EU Strategy for Enlargement covers the entire Balkans region and called on the media to wait for the official presentation of the document on 6 February in Strasbourg. Answering on the question of the journalists for the non-paper document submitted by Spain, which stresses that Kosovo is not part of the process of European integration, Kocijancic said that it has to be waited for the official presentation prior to hearing opinions of the member states.

**Four countries in the region concerned over EU’s selective approach (*Koha*)**

Kosovo, Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Bosnia and Herzegovina, have expressed concern over the content of the draft of the EU enlargement strategy for the region, referring to it as “a selective approach by the EU”, the paper reports on page three. Unnamed sources told the paper on Tuesday that the four countries are trying to undertake joint actions aimed at including some of their objectives in the strategy before it is voted by the European Commission on February 6.

**Pacolli: This government won’t make sense without adopting demarcation (*RTK*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo and Foreign Minister, Behxhet Pacolli, said the current government will be responsible for the lack of approval of the demarcation agreement. “This government would not make sense, if the ratification of the agreement is not reached within ten or fifteen days, which is the deadlines to keep up the step for liberalization of visas this year,” Pacolli said. He also told ***KTV*** that the initiative for abrogation of the Law on specialist chambers is terrible and scary. “It will not have the support of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR)” Pacolli said when asked if his political party would support the initiative if it reaches the Assembly.

**Demarcation not confirmed as topic in Markovic’s visit to Kosovo (*Kosova Sot*)**

Srdjan Kusovac, advisor to Montenegro Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, did not wish to comment on the question whether the issue of Kosovo-Montenegro border demarcation would be discussed during Montenegro PM’s visit to Kosovo on 6 February. “This is a regular bilateral and important visit as we are dealing with two neighbouring and friendly countries,” Kusovac said.

**Protest in downtown Pristina against air pollution today (*media*)**

Most news websites report that a protest will be held in front of the National Theatre in downtown Pristina today against air pollution. Media also report that cars will not be allowed to enter the center of the city starting from 06:00 today. The decision was made jointly by the Municipality of Pristina and the Ministry for Environment and Spatial Planning and the ban will be in force from 06:00 AM until 10:00 PM. Public buses will be offering free rides during this period. The Kosovo Assembly will hold today an extraordinary session on air pollution in Pristina.

**Haradinaj’s government doesn’t respect decisions of state institutions (*media*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page that “the Kosovo government has decided not to respect a decision by the Anti-Corruption Agency which ruled as unlawful the government’s decision to increase the salary of the Prime Minister and the salaries of his cabinet members and political staff”. The agency concluded recently that senior officials – the PM, Deputy PMs, ministers and deputy ministers – who voted in favor of this decision, “acted in opposition to the Law on preventing conflict of interest”. The Legal Office of the government said in a reaction that the agency’s decision – referring to it as an opinion – “is characterized by numerous legal inaccuracies and an unprofessional approach”. ***Zeri*** reports that the government has slammed the opinion of the Anti-Corruption Agency on decision to increase salaries for government officials saying it was “inaccurate” and “unprofessional”. In a written response to the paper, the government said it was readying a clarification but that denied the decision for pay raise to represent conflict of interest. “Legitimately and legally elected governments take decisions on their functioning every day and this does not represent a conflict of interest. The decision of the government is a collective decision,” the government said. Meanwhile, the paper reports that Finance Minister Bedri Hamza has decided not to implement the pay raise following the anti-corruption agency’s ruling. Pristina-based ***Gazeta Express*** news website covers the story under the headline ***Institutional brawl over salaries of government officials***.

***Time* ranks Haradinaj among “five most wanted geopolitical fugitives” (*media*)**

Several news websites cover an article published in the ***Time*** which notes that Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj is among “the five most wanted geopolitical fugitives of 2018”. The article says: “Kosovo’s Prime Minister made his name in the late 1990s during the conflict there. A commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, he was accused of presiding over the torture and murder of Serbs, but given a lack of evidence, he was cleared of war crimes by the UN in both 2008 and 2012. That wasn’t good enough for Serbia, which refuses to recognize Kosovo as an independent nation, and wants Haradinaj to be extradited to face justice in its courts. It’s not only in Serbia that Haradinaj faces legal challenges. At the behest of Western allies and helped by EU funding, Kosovo’s parliament in 2015 agreed to set up a special war crimes court based in the Netherlands but operating under Kosovo’s jurisdiction, a move widely considered instrumental in helping stabilize Balkan geopolitics. Only now that indictments are set to come down, Haradinaj and other members of Kosovo’s political elite are looking for ways to derail the inquiries. The U.S. and EU - who led the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia’s Slobodan Milosevic in the war - are both livid at Kosovo’s perceived flaunting of Western norms and values. Maybe Haradinaj and his allies figure Kosovo is too small for important geopolitical powers to care; the reality is that, to preserve the peace, they can’t afford not to”. Link to the full article: [*http://time.com/5124511/risk-report-geopolitical-fugitives-puigdemont-assange/*](http://time.com/5124511/risk-report-geopolitical-fugitives-puigdemont-assange/)

**Osmani: Special Court abrogation with consequences on integration (*RTK*)**

Kosovo Assembly MP from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), said on Tuesday at the Kosovo Assembly Committee for Foreign Affairs meeting that the initiative for abrogation of the Law on specialist chambers could harm Kosovo. “The initiative for abrogation of the Special Court could affect Kosovo’s relations with several countries. This initiative could also affect every application of Kosovo for membership at international organisations,” Selmani said.

**Vetevendosje to organize roundtable on Special Court today (*RTK*)**

Vetevendosje Movement will organize today a roundtable on the “Specialized chambers and relation with the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo.” They will discuss the process which led to the Special Court and legal initiative to abrogate the Law in specialized chambers – positions and implications.

**Deputy PM Hoxhaj talks Kosovo’s membership bid in CoE (*RTK*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, reported today to the Kosovo Assembly Committee for Foreign Affairs. He said Kosovo will be applying to become part of the Council of Europe. According to him, there are countries which do not recognize Kosovo but they will vote Kosovo in this case. He further added that if Kosovo applies now to become part of this organization, its acceptance is expected to happen by the end of 2019 or beginning of 2020. “There is not a greater priority than Kosovo’s membership at this international organization. Kosovo has been accepted at 66 international organizations. In this case we have worked to be accepted at this Council. We are not a member state there, however participation at activities of this Council is a privilege. After the European Union, this is the most important organisation. We as government, consider that we should send the request for membership. This process of membership takes up to two years,” Hoxhaj said

**Veseli and Apostolova discuss European agenda (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Assembly President, Kadri Veseli, met yesterday Head of EU Office in Kosovo and Special Representative, Nataliya Apostolova and discussed implementation of European Reform Agenda and the priorities of the Kosovo Assembly for this year. Veseli expressed the commitment of the Assembly to treat with priority all draft laws relating to European integration and to continuing cooperation with the EU Office and all other relevant mechanisms.

**U.S. updates list of persons banned from entering its territory (*media*)**

The Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury has updated the list of persons not allowed entry to the U.S. The media report that Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj continues to be in the list as does MP from the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) Daut Haradinaj, Vetevendosje MP Rexhep Selimi, Mayor of Drenas/Glogovac Ramiz Lladrovci, as well as former MPs from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), Azem Syla and Rrustem Mustafa.

**Kosovo PM Office reacts to U.S. black list (*RTK*)**

Avni Arifi, Chief of Staff at the Office of the Prime Minister commented the ban for 25 Kosovars to travel to the United States of America. Arifi said this list does not present any problem on the relations between Kosovo and the U.S. “During the war in Macedonia, in 2000, many of the individuals that are in this list, were suspected to have helped Albanians to win their rights. The war is over for 18 years now, but their names remained in this list,” Arifi said. Kosovo’ senior officials such as Deputy Prime Minister Fatmir Limaj, and MPs, including Daut Haradinaj and Rexhep Selimi are included in this list.

**Northerners say bridge over Ibar will not be opened (*media*)**

Most media report that Mitrovica North Mayor, Goran Rakic, told Belgrade-based ***Tanjug*** news agency that the main bridge in Mitrovica North will not be opened today. Rakic also said that earlier media reports that the main bridge would be opened were not true. “This is fake news aimed at causing instability in the northern part of Kosovo and to cause unrest among the Serb population,” Rakic was quoted as saying.

**Assembly committee passes draft law for president’s privileges (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Assembly committee on European Integration passed a draft law for amending the law on Kosovo president providing more benefits for the holders of the post. Opposition MPs criticized the draft law saying institutional leaders are gaining life-long privileges based on their personal will and that the law creates social inequality.

**AAK rewards person who insulted U.S. ambassador (*Bota Sot*)**

The paper reports that the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) has appointed the deputy chairman of the Kosovo Liberation Army veterans’ association, Nasim Haradinaj, as head of the Municipality of Decan’s directorate for agriculture, forestry and rural development. Most recently, Haradinaj came under media spotlight for his remarks on the activists of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) whose killing after the war he categorized as being “no big deal”. In addition, Haradinaj also insulted the U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Greg Delawie, by calling him a “clown”.

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