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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Specialist court will not be abrogated (*dailies*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci told a group of reporters yesterday that the specialist chambers “cannot” and “will not” be abrogated adding that this is the position of Kosovo. He said however that the establishment of the special chambers was imposed on Kosovo and represents “an injustice”. “From conversations with political leaders as well as with Assembly President Veseli and Prime Minister Haradinaj, it is clear that the Specialist Court cannot and will not be abrogated,” Thaci said. “This is the position of the state of Kosovo presented by the president of the country in line with institutional, constitutional and legal hierarchy,” Thaci added. ***Koha Ditore*** interprets Thaci’s remarks on the specialist court as a clear indication that the Kosovo leadership has backed down on the initiative to abrogate it while ***Zeri*** carries the following caption: *Thaci’s special withdrawal.* With regards to border demarcation with Montenegro, Thaci said the agreement needs to be concluded as soon as possible so that the people of Kosovo can travel freely to Europe. “I wish to believe that the demarcation issue will be finalised in the near future,” Thaci said. Thaci also reprimanded the government for being “negligent” on the issue of Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities which he said is causing delays on Kosovo processes. He said he was convinced Kosovo will get its own army. “We are closing this process in coordination with NATO and other partners. Therefore, I remain convinced that 2018 will be the year of transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into Kosovo Armed Forces,” Thaci said. He further spoke about the dialogue with Serbia, saying that an agreement will be reached this year.

**Haradinaj sends message to EU and Washington (*KTV*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, in an interview to ***KTV*** on Thursday evening, said that “it has been two decades that the European Union and Washington cannot solve a problem in the Balkans and if they cannot do this, how can they lead the world”. “If the EU and Washington do not invest their energy here, I think the entire region will be affected. The situation is not sustainable if Kosovo will be indefinitely kept in a limbo,” said Haradinaj. “In many meetings with the EU and U.S. officials I was very frank in my opinions. Sometimes they are surprised. Sometimes they misunderstand me or they think that I am threatening”. Haradinaj said it was unfair to leave two million people in an undefined state. “We are recognized by 23 (EU) member states, and the remaining five should recognize Kosovo. We are recognized by over 100 countries, so let’s finish the job now,” he said. Haradinaj did not comment on a statement by his Deputy, Behgjet Pacolli, who said that he could leave the ruling coalition if a solution to the demarcation with Montenegro is not found in 10-15 days. “Those that I meet every day should not be sending me messages for demarcation,” he said. Haradinaj also said that those that are pressuring him on the issue have no concrete proposals and are “only preventing me in finding a quick solution”. He added that the upcoming visit by the Montenegrin Prime Minister to Pristina could help find a solution to the issue. “It surely won’t provide all the answers. We will communicate that day, the topic will be discussed and it will surely be advanced,” he said.

**Haradinaj respects hierarchy, refrains from commenting on specialist court (*Koha*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said the government he leads would not comment on the initiative to abrogate law on specialist chambers. In a joint press conference with Justice Minister Abelard Tahiri, Haradinaj said: “We have an institutional hierarchy starting with the president, the parliament and the government. We remain that way. We have no position on this issue as it is under a regular procedure. We will inform you on our position in the future,” Haradinaj said.

**Haradinaj’s border demarcation plan (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, is expected to present to his Montenegrin counterpart, Dusko Markovic, a plan on border demarcation which is hoped would secure sufficient votes at the Assembly of Kosovo, the paper reports on the front page. The plan is to get the Montenegrin side to agree on renegotiating the current border demarcation agreement if the Kosovo side provides concrete evidence.

**“Stability in Kosovo to be maintained even after special court indictments” (*dailies*)**

Admiral James Foggo, commander of NATO’s Allied Joint Force Command Naples, said in a visit to Mitrovica yesterday that KFOR will continue to maintain peace and stability in Kosovo even after the specialist court issues its indictments. “In case of any unrest, tensioning of the situation or security decline, we will all work together and KFOR is here for you,” said Admiral Foggo. ***Zeri*** highlights that the NATO officials met both the Mayor of Mitrovica, Agim Bahtiri, and that of Mitrovica North, Goran Rakic, and after a joint press conference they all shook hands, on the insistence of Admiral Foggo and KFOR Commander Salvatore Cuoci.

**Haliti: Special Court has to happen, I do not fear it (RTK)**

Deputy President of the Assembly of Kosovo, Xhavit Haliti, said the Special Court cannot be stopped. “I believe that it was not done intentionally to us, therefore it will happen very soon. He said that at the beginning, when it was voted, he was against its establishment, and now he is against abrogation of the Law on Special Court. “I am neither the greatest patriot nor traitor in PDK. But I want to be responsible, that Kosovo has to respect international agreements and responsibilities,” Haliti said.

**Serbian PM Brnabic to meet UNMIK chief Tanin (*Klan Kosova*)**

Prime Minster of Serbia, Ana Brnabic, is expected to meet head of UNMIK, Zahir Tanin, ahead of the regular session of the UN Security Council on Kosovo. Tanin earlier met Foreign Minister Ivica Dadid and discussed the political and security situation in Kosovo, including the murder of the Kosovo Serb political leader Oliver Ivanovic and the attempts to abrogate law on specialist chambers.

**Vucic against frozen conflict with Kosovo (*Kosova Sot*)**

The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, said there are different examples of binding agreements for normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. He however added that such document means looking towards the future. “I am a fan of not escaping solution and not keeping frozen conflicts. I want us not to have problems and not to inherit problems to our children. I know that no one wants to hear this, but this means looking towards the future with a responsible approach,” Vucic told journalists in Belgrade. According to his, some countries propose the example of two Germanys while the others consider that Serbia and Kosovo should resolve problems prior to signing the agreement.

**Brnabic: We should return to Brussels dialogue (*RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabic, said during her visit to Slovenia that statement of the President of the European Parliament, Anton Tahan, that Serbia is not obliged to recognize Kosovo for EU membership, was very clear. “However, we should return to the Brussels agreement, which was signed five years ago and which has to be implemented by official Pristina,” Brnabic said. She added further that she hopes the countries which support Kosovo would exercise their impact on fulfillment of the obligations deriving from Brussels agreement. “Prior to opening new issues, it is important for Kosovo to fulfill its obligations deriving from the Brussels agreement as well,” Brnabic said.

**Hoxhaj to Brnabic: There is no stability without mutual recognition (*RTK*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj reacted to the announcements of the Serbian Prime Minister, Ana Brnabic, who quoted the President of the European Parliament as saying in a closed meeting that there is no need for Serbia to recognize Kosovo in order to become an EU member. “There cannot be lasting peace and stability in Western Balkans without mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia. A legally binding agreement must be signed between the two countries. Statements like below are attempts to manipulate the reality by producing fake news,” Hoxhaj wrote on his Twitter account.

**Kosovo government suspends decision on salary increase (*media*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said on Thursday that his government has temporarily suspended the decision to increase the salaries of staff. The decision will remain suspended until a ruling by the Constitutional Court. “I propose we temporarily suspend the decision on salary increase until a decision is made by the Constitutional Court. Unfortunately, this decision will affect not only those sitting at this table but also the judiciary and the prosecution. The decision will be suspended out of respect for the institutions,” Haradinaj said at the government meeting.

**Assembly adopts resolution in an effort to tackle high level of air pollution (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Assembly passed a resolution yesterday requesting for environment protection to be declared a Kosovo priority. The resolution also calls on Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK) to replace the power plant filters by the end of the year and urges relevant institutions to carry out controls of the quality of oil. The resolution also calls on the heating company Termokos to enable more households to get access to its services. Head of the Assembly, Kadri Veseli, said the resolution was passed with full consensus. “The Assembly of Kosovo will treat the environment as a matter of priority and will request implementation of obligations agreed on in this session,” Veseli said.

**Former VV MPs form own parliamentary group (*Koha*)**

Citing sources in the Kosovo Assembly, ***KTV*** reported on Thursday evening that ten former MPs of the Vetevendosje Movement who resigned from this party have submitted a request to the Assembly for a new parliamentary group. The list of former VV MPs includes: Visar Ymeri, Dardan Molliqaj, Dardan Sejdiu, Dukagjin Gorani, Aida Derguti, Shqipe Pantina, Faton Topalli, Fisnik Ismaili, Driton Caushi and Donika Kadaj-Bujupi. The Assembly’s administration is expected to officially announce the formation of the new parliamentary group very soon. The paper also notes that with the departure of these MPs, Vetevendosje will no longer be the biggest force in the Assembly.

**Delawie meets Ternava, discuss extremism (*RTK*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Greg Delawie, met on Thursday with Mufti Naim Ternava. They discussed religious freedoms and extremism in Kosovo. “Happy to host Grand Mufti Ternava and other representatives of the Islamic Community, to talk about religious freedom and countering violent extremism in Kosovo,” Delawie wrote on his Twitter account.

**FYROM Defence Minister visits Kosovo (*Telegrafi*)**

The Defence Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Radmila Sekerinska-Jankovska, will visit the Ministry of the Kosovo Security Force and the “Adem Jashari” KSF barracks. Sekerinska-Jankovska is also expected to meet Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj.

**Six years in jail for “Balkans drug lord”, Naser Kelmendi (*media*)**

Several media report that the Basic Court in Pristina has found Naser Kelmendi, often referred to as the Drug Lord of the Balkans, guilty of the “unauthorized possession with intent to distribute, sell and/or export/import dangerous narcotic drugs” and jailed him for six years. The court found Kelmendi not guilty of the murder of Ramiz Delacic. The court also decided that the time Kelmendi spent in custody from May 2013 to June 2017, will be deducted from his sentence.

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