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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Border demarcation “knot” to be resolved this week? (*dailies*)**

The border demarcation with Montenegro is a topic extensively covered by most of the papers today with the majority anticipating a solution in sight. ***Koha Ditore*** reports that efforts are under way by ruling coalition parties in Pristina to resolve the issue before the visit of Montenegro Prime Minister Dusko Markovic to Kosovo. Ruling parties, adds the paper, are seeking a justification to support the border demarcation agreement. To this end, the Assembly chairmanship will meet today and set the date for the plenary session in which the border demarcation agreement will be put up for vote. ***Zeri*** also reports that the coming days are expected to be decisive regarding the border demarcation. Meanwhile ***Bota Sot*** reports that Kosovo Foreign Minister Behgjet Pacolli invited to a dinner last night all the government ministers, including President Hashim Thaci and Assembly President Kadri Veseli, and that an agreement to ratify the border demarcation bill was reached in this meeting. “There is agreement to pass the demarcation on condition that if there are mistakes, they will be corrected. Montenegro has also agreed to this,” a source told Kosovo media. However, PM Ramush Haradinaj’s advisor Avni Arifi said there is no story to the dinner called by FM Pacolli. ***Kosova Sot*** reports that the topic of the dinner was President Thaci’s proposal to move government institutions from downtown Pristina to the village of Hajvalia which is where Pacolli’s residence is located.

**Montenegro PM: Demarcation is a closed issue (*RTK*)**

Prime Minister of Montenegro, Dusko Markovic, told ***RTK*** ahead of his Kosovo visit that there is nothing to discuss with Kosovo authorities regarding the border demarcation issue. “Demarcation is a closed issue for Montenegro. Agreement has been signed by the two countries and Montenegro has ratified this agreement in the parliament. Montenegro has done its part. I believe the parliament of Kosovo will ratify the agreement. Prolongation does not help the solution,” Markovic said.

**Haliti: Limaj’s idea for demarcation is not a novelty (*Zeri*)**

Deputy President of the Assembly of Kosovo, Xhavit Haliti, told the paper that the idea of the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Fatmir Limaj for demarcation does not represent a novelty. According to him, the Agreement signed in Vienna in in 2015 foresees reconsidering of the points suspected for mistakes during the process. He confirmed that lack of ratification of the Agreement would isolate Kosovo, and expressed hope for a solution during the visit of the Montenegrin Prime Minister.

**Vetevendosje does not change position on demarcation (*dailies*)**

Vetevendosje will not be changing its position on the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro, said MP Arberie Nagavci at a press conference. She said however that Vetevendosje does support the report prepared by the government’s commission on border demarcation led by Shpejtim Bulliqi. “The new government commission has provided plenty of material supporting concerns of many citizens and MPs,” Nagavci said adding that she finds it incomprehensible how a prime minister would send such an agreement to the Assembly instead of handing it over to prosecution authorities.

**Serbian List has no position on border demarcation deal (*Koha/RFE*)**

Serbian List spokesperson, Igor Simic, told ***RFE*** that his party has not yet decided which way to vote on the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. He said the border issue is of no priority for the Serbian List and that they have had no consultations with their coalition partners on the matter. “I could not give at this point clarification regarding this issue. Demarcation is not among top priorities when we speak about Serbian MPs in the Kosovo Assembly. When we talk of obligations Kosovo has assumed towards the international community, establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities is a priority for us,” Simic said. However he ruled out the possibility of the Serbian List trading its vote on the demarcation bill in exchange for the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. “We will fight for the interests of the Serbs but we will not blackmail anyone,” Simic pointed out.

**EP’s Soltes: Visa liberalisation ball on the side of Kosovo politicians (*Koha*)**

European Parliament rapporteur on visa liberalisation for Kosovo, Igor Soltes, told the Montenegro-based daily ***Pobjeda*** that the upcoming meeting between Kosovo’s Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and Montenegro’s Prime Minister Dusko Markovic will be a good opportunity for reaching a fast solution that would enable the people of Kosovo visa-free travel to Europe. “There could be another solution found that would lead to unblocking at the Kosovo parliament, a second or third formula that would resolve the border demarcation issue. But we can talk about this after the prime ministers’ meeting,” Soltes said. According to him, the visa liberalisation ball is on the side of Kosovo politicians and that it is unacceptable that Kosovo is the only society in the region deprived of the right to free travel.

**Serbian side rebuts Arifi’s statement on continuation of dialogue (*Klan Kosova*)**

The Serbian negotiating team for normalisation of relations with Kosovo has rebutted the statement of Kosovo’s chief negotiator, Avni Arifi, that the resumption of the dialogue could take place by the end of February. The Serbian team, reported ***Tanjug***, said Arifi’s statement was not true.

**Dacic: Ready for historic agreement with Kosovo but not recognition (*RTK*)**

Serbia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dacic, reiterated that there is no chance for Serbia to recognize the independence of Kosovo. He however added that they are ready for compromise in order to reach a historic agreement. “We want to reach a compromise with Kosovo, but we cannot approve their unilateral secession,” Dacic said. He criticized powerful states for making pressure on Serbia to recognize Kosovo. “How can they not be ashamed to propose to us such a thing. We have told them that the agreement with Kosovo is necessary, but this does not mean that we recognize independence,” Dacic said. “Kosovo will never become independent, because Serbia has friends on its side, first of all Russia and China, he concluded.

**Hoxhaj: No reconciliation with Serbia without recognition of Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, reacted to the statements of Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic, that there is no chance for Serbia to recognize Kosovo. Hoxhaj said that destructive political discourse of Serbia’s leadership risks the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. He added that relations cannot normalize without Kosovo’s membership at the United Nations, just as reconciliation between populations is impossible without mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia.

**EC to present more demands than offers for the Western Balkans (*Koha Ditore*)**

Ahead of the European Commission’s unveiling of the enlargement strategy this week, the paper reports on the front page that the final text of the document will provide concrete action plans on how the EU envisages its efforts to help the Western Balkans countries reach required European standards. At the same time, the paper adds, the EC will make it clear that the Western Balkans cannot integrate into the EU at the state in which they are at present. The main elements of the document refer to the need for countries in the region to resolve border disputes, normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, and focus on the rule of law.

**Trajkovic accuses Vucic for connections with Serb Mafia in Kosovo (*Zeri*)**

Serb politician from Kosovo, Rada Trajkovic, has accused Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vucic, about the influence of Serb Mafia in Kosovo. Trajkovic, who is former MP of the Assembly of Kosovo, insisted that Milan Radojicic was involved in Oliver Ivanovic’s murder. “We were very much afraid from Albanians and there is not discussion that we have suffered from them. But at these moments we all fear Serbs…year this is true. Why should Albanians kill us when the Mafiosi group which killed Serbs for Albanian projects has already been installed. I do not know how much will I endure for speaking, but I have to say it,” Trajkovic said.

**Albanian FM encourages Greece to recognise Kosovo (*dailies*)**

Albanian Foreign Minister, Ditmir Bushati, said in an interview to a Greek TV channel that Albania would welcome a decision by the Greek government to recognise Kosovo as the right thing to do and encourages it to do so. Bushati said recognition of Kosovo by Greece would be an “investment for the stability of our region.”

**Government silent to criticism for employment of ministry secretary (*Koha*)**

The government of Kosovo has not commented on the criticism by the British Embassy and a number of civil society organisations regarding the employment of the new secretary general to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The British Embassy, which has signed an MoU with the government of Kosovo to support efforts to independence and meritocracy in the process of recruitment of senior positions, opposed the selection of Burim Rreci to the post saying he has not met the necessary criteria insisting that Gentiana Islamaj was the right candidate for the post.

**German judge accuses EULEX of not being interested in rule of law (*RTK*)**

Former EULEX judge, Torsten Koschninka, has said that officials at European Union Mission for the Rule of Law in Kosovo were not interested in the rule of law. Koschninka who is currently working at the District Court in Gorlitz, Germany, worked as international judge at EULEX from 2008 to 2011. “Many people were simply not qualified to work there, especially at the most senior levels. Some people did not understand the basic idea of the rule of law. They were not interested on the rule of law. They thought that Law is only a friendly recommendation,” he said. “We went there to promote the rule of law and bring rule of law in Kosovo. We wanted to contribute on this point. I was completely surprised to be witness of such lack of professionalism,” he added.

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