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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo Assembly to vote on border demarcation agreement today (*dailies*)**

All papers report that the Kosovo Assembly will convene today at 11.00hrs to discuss and vote on the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. On the front page, ***Koha Ditore*** anticipates that the agreement will not pass as the ruling parties have not secured enough votes and that they also hinted at the possibility of the voting being postponed. ***Zeri*** also reports that the coalition parties are not certain they have the necessary votes to ratify the agreement and that the hopes rest with the Serbian List MPs who have indicated they would vote in favour of the bill in exchange for the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. Under the caption, *Demarcation battle today,* ***Epoka e Re***gives an overview of what parties will support the bill saying that only Vetevendosje has come out against the agreement while the Serbian List is left out of the paper’s equation. Meanwhile, ***Bota Sot*** on the front page carries a picture of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj under the following headline: *Farewell Kulla and Cakorr, Murat Meha’s version did not change but Haradinaj’s position did.*

**International diplomats in Pristina mobilise ahead of demarcation vote (*dailes*)**

Ahead of the border demarcation agreement vote, the U.S. Ambassador in Kosovo, Greg Delawie, and Head of EU Office in Kosovo, Nataliya Apostolova, met separately several Kosovo political parties in a bid to get confirmation that their MPs will vote in favour of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. In two consecutive Twitter posts, Delawie said citizens of Kosovo have waited long enough for visa liberalisation and that it was time the MPs ratified the demarcation agreement. Later on, Delawie tweeted: “Amazing how hard some people are working trying to keep Kosovo citizens from travelling in Europe!”

**Kurti: Border demarcation not the only visa liberalisation condition (*Zeri*)**

Vetevendosje leader, Albin Kurti, said in a press conference yesterday that the statement signed by President of Montenegro Filip Vujanovic and Kosovo’s Hashim Thaci is a “manipulation” and that its aim is to save certain people at the government of Kosovo. He highlighted that ratification of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro is not the only condition for visa liberalisation and that fight of corruption and organised crime are also among the visa liberalisation criteria. “Why all this haste on the part of Thaci and Haradinaj? Liberalisation will not come next week or even next month,” Kurti said adding that Kosovo leaders, Ramush Haradinaj and Hashim Thaci, are pushing for ratification of the border agreement to save their own posts. He also said all Vetevendosje MPs have the same stance regarding the issue and that “there is no Vetevendosje MP who has expressed any doubt that can be interpreted as change of position.”

**Switzerland opposes ideas of Kosovo’s partition (*media*)**

Former Swiss President, Micheline Calmy-Rey, said on Wednesday in Pristina that Switzerland rejects all ideas for the exchange of territories in the Balkans. Calmy-Rey made these remarks after meeting Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Behgjet Pacolli. The latter too said that such ideas would open the Pandora’s Box in the region.

**Hoxhaj: Visa liberalization depends on Albanian MP votes (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister, Enver Hoxhaj, told ***RTV Dukagjini*** on Wednesday that visa liberalization will be the biggest achievement for Kosovo in the last five-six years. “Membership of the European Union is a geo-political and economic orientation and it is a process that may take more than ten years. But visa-free movement is immediate and we can benefit from it directly,” Hoxhaj said. He added that “visa liberalization depends on the votes of Albanian MPs on Thursday”. According to Hoxhaj, the government has the required votes to adopt the border demarcation deal with Montenegro. He did not rule out negotiations with individual MPs from all political parties. He also said he believes that some Serbian List MPs will vote in favor of the agreement.

**“With ratification of demarcation, Kosovo catches last train for visas” (*Epoka*)**

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) deputy leader Lutfi Haziri, told the paper on Wednesday that LDK MPs are united to vote in favor of the border demarcation deal between Kosovo and Montenegro. He added that if the agreement is not ratified, Kosovo losses the last momentum for visa liberalization. Speaking about the dialogue between Prsitina and Belgrade, Haziri said that this process will conclude with active role of LDK. He added that no results can be expected without inclusion of all key actors in Kosovo, including opposition.

**Thaci: Russia could play positive role by recognising Kosovo (*Koha/KP*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said in an interview to the German daily ***Die Tageszeitung*** that Kosovo is a success story. “We are continuously improving our international position. The economy is on the rise and we have achieved 4 percent economic growth in the recent years,” Thaci said. Asked to comment on Kosovo’s European perspective, Thaci said Kosovo has a clear vision of Euro-Atlantic integration. “We are patient and we will work very hard to improve the situation in Kosovo,” he said adding: “Anti-western positions and ideologies have no chance in succeeding or having influence in Kosovo. Above all, we want the EU to reflect on its hesitating policy.” Thaci accused Russia of using its power at the UN Security Council to prevent Kosovo from joining the UN but also spoke of the five EU member states refusing to recognise independence of Kosovo saying this presented “a huge handicap.” He said Russia could play a very positive role for the peace process if it were to recognise Kosovo as an independent country. “This would enable the Serb leadership to step out of the false mythology,” Thaci said.

**Pacolli expects Spain to recognize Kosovo soon (*Epoka*)**

The interview of Kosovo’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Behxhet Pacolli given to the Spanish state news agency, EFE, was covered by Spanish and European media. One of the most read newspapers in Spain, “La Vanguardia” reported in a long article about the interview, under the title “Kosovo reiterates that its case is not related to the Catalonian one.” Pacolli expressed trust for a speedy recognition of the independence of Kosovo from Spain, and that Kosovo’s case is not comparable to the Catalonian one. The interview was also reported by Deutsche Welle in an article entitled “Kosovo believes to reach an agreement with Serbia which ensures EU membership. “We will have an agreement Serbia, which has to accept that Kosovo exists and it is an independent state,” Pacolli reportedly said, He added that Kosovo should also accept that Serbia is its important neighbor for peace and prosperity in Balkans. Panama’s daily “La Estella de Panama” also reported on Pacolli’s interview.

**Hoti responds to Vucic (*RTK*)**

Caucus of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Avdullah Hoti, replied to the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, who stated that Hoti speaks based on instructions from the internationals. “Vucic, your new phrases and costumes do not cover the caused crimes and genocide. Instead of lecturing us, better go pray for the victims of your policies,” Hoti said.

**Delawie condemns threats against Serb KSF members (*Zeri/Epoka*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Greg Delawie, has condemned the recent threats against Serb members of the Kosovo Security Force in Zubin Potok. “All of Kosovo’s citizens deserve the right to be safe while living their lives, going to work. We condemn threats against KSF members in Zubin Potok and call on authorities to fully investigate. We support the integration of Kosovo Serbs in all Kosovo institutions,” Delawie tweeted. Few days ago, the media reported that Kosovo Police were investigating threats against Serb KSF members in Zubin Potok contained in a leaflet signed by an unknown group calling itself Severna Armija (Northern Army). The leaflet listed the names of seven Serb residents claimed to be part of KSF. “We will meet soon. No municipality or police can protect you,” the leaflet read.

**U.S. Embassy in Tirana reacts to Edi Rama’s speech on Kosovo (*RTK*)**

The United States urged Albania on Wednesday to avoid “careless language” after its prime minister suggested a single president and single security policy for both his country and neighbouring Kosovo in a speech that infuriated Serbia. The U.S. embassy in Tirana expressed disappointment with Rama’s comments. “Careless language alluding to unification is unhelpful and damaging to Albania’s relationships with its neighbours. We call on all leaders to be good neighbours and abandon the divisive language of the past,” it said in a statement.

**Kosovo ranked 85 on Transparency International corruption index (*media*)**

The anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International has published its annual corruption perception index ranking Kosovo on the 85th place of the total of 180 countries assessed. Kosovo has scored 39 points on the level of public sector corruption with 0 indicating a highly corrupt country or territory and 100 being very clean. Compared to last year, Kosovo has made slight progress by climbing from the 95th to 85th place, media highlight.

**Missing persons families press institutions into suing Serbia for genocide (*Koha*)**

In a conference on the fate of missing persons held in Pristina yesterday, families of the missing persons and victims of the conflict in Kosovo called on institutions to sue Serbia for genocide. The participants said Kosovo has not done enough to document and prosecute crimes committed during 1998-99 period. At the same time, head of the Kosovo government’s commission for missing persons, Prenk Gjetaj, remarked that there is no readiness on the part of the Serb side to cooperate on the issue of missing persons.

**Attack with explosive device on U.S. Embassy in Montenegro (*media*)**

Most online media report that an unknown person committed suicide with an explosive device in front of the United States Embassy in Podgorica, Montenegro, on Thursday. The Montenegrin government said in a press release that the explosive device was most probably a hand grenade and that investigations are ongoing. The U.S. Embassy confirmed the attack. Police said they do not know the motives behind the suicide attack. “An incident has happened,” a police official told ***Reuters*** without disclosing further details.

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