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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Kosovo army cannot come about without Serb vote (*Koha Ditore*)**

The paper reports on the front page that the creation of the Kosovo army is not possible without the votes from Serbian List MPs as the international community remains adamant that this process requires support of all communities in Kosovo. The international community recognizes that the decision to transform the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) into Kosovo Armed Forces (KAF) rests with Kosovo institutions but maintain it should be done through constitutional changes. As a result, the government of Kosovo has turned its focus on successive advancement of KSF capacities within a ten-year period.

**Haradinaj: Visa liberalisation this year (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, said after the government’s meeting yesterday that he expects the people of Kosovo to be able to travel without visas to Europe by the end of the year. He said the EU will give an assessment on implementation of visa liberalisation criteria next month which, in Haradinaj’s view, will be positive. He said he is trying to assure European countries that visa liberalisation for Kosovo will not translate into an influx of criminals and emigrants but will merely enable people to travel freely.

**Appointment of Serb Constitutional Court member draws criticism (*Koha*)**

The Pristina-based Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) has called on President Hashim Thaci not to decree Radomir Laban as a judge with the Constitutional Court without verifying his past. Laban was elected as a judge on Friday by members of the Kosovo Assembly but soon afterwards there were claims about his alleged criminal background. The Council said Thaci should not sign the decree for Laban “until his background is finally cleared”. “This can be done easily if there is readiness and if the process does not give in to political interference,” the Council said in a letter. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes reports from Serbian media dating to 2012 alleging that Laban was part of a criminal enterprise in Serbia and that he was wanted by authorities there. Veton Elshani from the Kosovo Police office for international cooperation, said he could not confirm whether Laban was sought out by Interpol. Opposition Vetevendosje has also come out against Laban’s appointment. MP Albulena Haxhiu sent a letter to President Thaci asking him not to decree Laban to the post because of his past. Haxhiu wrote that Constitution of Kosovo stipulates that judges appointed to serve with the Constitutional Court should possess “highest morale” and “excellent reputation”.

**Vetevendosje invites all political parties but the Serbian List to roundtable (*RTK*)**

Vetevendosje Movement will be the host of the next round table of Kosovo political parties which will be held on 25 May. This political party confirmed that it will invite all the political parties registered at the Central Election Commission, including the Social-Democratic party of Kosovo. However, member of the leadership of this political party, Tinka Kurti, said “The Secretariat is preparing all the invitations for all the political parties registered at CEC and which recognize the independence of Kosovo.” According to this political party, the round table aims reach of consensus for early parliamentary elections.

**PM Haradinaj travels to Vatican (*media*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, has travelled for an official visit to the Vatican, media report quoting officials from the government. Although not confirmed, Haradinaj is expected to be received in audience by Pope Francis and also meet Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican’s Secretary for Relations with States.

**Haradinaj meets Meta, discuss processes in Kosovo and Albania (*Epoka*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj, met on Monday with the President of Albania Ilir Meta. They discussed visa liberlaisation for Kosovo and opening of negotiations for Albania’s membership at the EU. “Kosovo-Albania cooperation in these two but also other matters, will continue to strengthen,” Haradinaj wrote on his Facebook page.

**Haradinaj announces pay cuts for Kosovo Telecom (*media*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, announced that the salaries of Kosovo Telecom staff need to be cut in an effort to save the company from going bankrupt. “The government is not in favor of reducing salaries. The topic of the Telecom is taking up valuable time and we need to save the company. We should not accept bankruptcy, this would be bad news for the staff; we should not go down that road. We need to take all necessary measures to save this company … Salaries will have to be reduced,” Haradinaj told reporters. He said that pay cuts would affect more the senior management. “A 10 percent reduction for the staff and 20 percent reduction for the management if they want this company to survive,” Haradinaj said.

**Vucic: Church should not be dealing with Kosovo (*Epoka*)**

The President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic has denied claims that the state is behaving as if it is the Church’s fault for Kosovo. “I do not think that the Orthodox Church should be making the most important political decisions,” Vucic said. He added that there is no need for the Church to deal with political decisions which determine the direction of the country, but that it of course, can give opinions and advises.

**Citizens fear returnees from conflict zones (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo people continue to believe that violent extremism remains a serious threat for national security. 75 percent of the respondents in the report of the Kosovo Center for Security Studies consider that violent extremism represents threat to national security. The report indicates that Kosovo people trust more Kosovo Police than the government of Kosovo, the Assembly and the Courts, with regards to those who fought in the foreign wars and returned to Kosovo.

**Albanians asked for permits to reconstruct own homes in the north (*Zeri*)**

Bashkim Cimili, deputy head of Mitrovica North municipal assembly, told the paper that the Administrative Office in the North is requesting construction permits to Albanians who wish to reconstruct their own homes in the north of Kosovo. According to Cimili, Albanians in the north are the only ones being asked for permits to reconstruct their homes who have been damaged through no fault of their own. Adriana Hodzic, who runs the Administrative Office, said the Ministry for Returns in cooperation with the Danish Refugee Council and the British Embassy implemented a project that enabled return of 20 Albanian families in Mitrovica North.

**Gjilan/Gnjilane to open multiethnic market (*Kosovapress/Koha*)**

The Municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane has made final preparations for the opening of a multiethnic market near the Orthodox Church in the city. Mayor Lutfi Haziri together with UN officials in Kosovo inspected the final stage of the project which is expected to be officially inaugurated in the coming days. Haziri also said they are making preparations to open mobile markets in several locations throughout the municipality.

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