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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci: Mutual recognition at end of dialogue with Serbia (*Telegrafi*)**

In an interview to ***RTV Dukagjini***, President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci said that the two biggest risks for Kosovo regarding dialogue with Serbia are lack of participation and lack of unity. He said the EU and US have given a clear message that without normalisation of relations, neither Serbia nor Kosovo can hope to join the EU. “We have been successful whenever we trusted Washington and Brussels,” Thaci said adding: “At the end of the dialogue process, there needs to be mutual recognition between Kosovo and Serbia and then Kosovo can join the UN, EU, NATO.”

**Disagreements over Thaci block government platform on dialogue (*Koha*)**

The Kosovo Assembly Presidency did not submit for discussion the government’s platform for dialogue with Serbia due to differing positions between the ruling coalition parties, and the refusal of opposition parties to accept a leading role for President Hashim Thaci in dialogue with Serbia. Representatives of ruling parties however have denied that delays are a result of lack of consensus about the platform. Memli Krasniqi, head of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) parliamentary group, told the paper on Wednesday: “there are points that are delayed even more from the moment when the commission discusses them and until they reach the Assembly Presidency”. The PDK has called for a broad-based consensus on dialogue. Meanwhile, the Pristina-based Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) argues that the Assembly so far has not shown interest to give priority to the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue. In a press release issued on Thursday, the KDI argued that the Assembly should serve as the main platform to discuss further steps in the process. “KDI calls on members of the Kosovo Assembly to call an extraordinary session as soon as possible and discuss the new phase of dialogue with Serbia and Kosovo’s state platform for the process,” the press release noted.

**Pacolli: Visa liberalisation date to be known at end of month (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said in Vienna that Austria will strongly support visa liberalisation for Kosovo as well as its membership in international organisations, namely Interpol and UNESCO. Pacolli also said that the exact date of when Kosovo people will be able to travel freely to Europe will be known “by the end of the month”.

**Recica: Elections are not a solution for current situation (*T7*)**

Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) MP, Elmi Recica, in an interview to ***T7***, ruled out the possibility of early parliamentary elections, saying that opposition parties lack the votes to oust the Haradinaj-led government. Recica also said that his party and the other parties of the ruling coalition do not view early elections as a solution to the current situation. “The PDK is not afraid of elections. We have a clear position: elections are not a solution for the current situation. They are not the solution for Kosovo,” he added.

**Serbs in the north oppose newly-adopted Trepca statute (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports that Serbs in the north of Kosovo and the management of the Trepca mining complex in the north have opposed the newly-adopted statute by the government of Kosovo. Jovan Dimkic, Trepca’s general director in the north whose mandate according to Kosovo officials has expired, said the new statute will not bring about positive change and will not better workers’ perspective. Furthermore, he said the move is politically motivated. At the same time, Igor Simic from the Serbian List said Trepca’s new statute is “continuation of violence against Serbs.” “This is yet another example of how Pristina through its institutions carries out state and legal violence against the Serb people in Kosovo. We are frightened by the silence of international community towards these unilateral actions,” Simic said. Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said the approval of the new statute is a turning point which transforms Trepca into an operational company.

**Lekaj: Construction ongoing on Decan – Plave road (*Bota Sot*)**

Kosovo’s Minister for Infrastructure, Pal Lekaj, told the paper on Wednesday that construction is ongoing on the road Decan – Plave. “According to the plan and the contract, the economic operator is rebuilding the road between Decan and the border with Montenegro. Serb citizens and religious institutions in Kosovo should not act according to Belgrade’s will, because this will only result in problems and obstacles for their integration in Kosovo,” Lekaj said. He also said that the construction work does not threaten the special protective zone of Decan Monastery.

**“Government appointing coordinators to drain out Kosovo budget” (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the front page that apart from 21 ministers and 74 deputy ministers, the government of Kosovo led by Ramush Haradinaj, has now begun to appoint national coordinators whose salaries are at the same grade as those of ministers. The first to gain such a position was Avdullah Hasani who was appointed coordinator for young generation and followed by Besnik Tahiri, national coordinator for state reforms. Most recently Prime Minister Haradinaj appointed Mendim Rugova, son of the late president Ibrahim Rugova, to the post of coordinator for climate change and environment and Rexhep Hoti, deputy leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), as coordinator for culture, youth and sports. Apart from a ministerial-level salary, coordinators are also entitled to hire personal assistant and two advisors each. Opposition parties and civil society representatives accuse the government of “inventing” such posts to accommodate party militants saying they will only drain out Kosovo budget. Haradinaj said the practice of appointing national coordinators is applied in many countries and added that there are many issues that pertain not only to one specific ministry and that someone needs to coordinate this.

**Photos by Kosovo artist denied entry into Serbia (*media*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports in one of its front-page stories that the Serbian Radical Party held a protest on Wednesday against the festival “Miredita – Dobar Dan” in Belgrade organized by liberal groups from Serbia and Kosovo. Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the radicals, attended the protest. The paper further notes that the Serbian government too was involved in the plan to obstruct the festival. Serbian authorities namely prevented Pristina-based artist Eliza Hoxha from bringing several photographs and an exhibition catalogue that show the flags of Kosovo and Albania and symbols of the Kosovo Liberation Army into Serbia on Wednesday. Hoxha was among several Kosovo artists who were stopped for two hours at the Merdare border-crossing point while travelling to Belgrade. Pristina-based ***Telegrafi*** news website reports that the Serbian Ministry of Interior Affairs issued a press release saying that Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic gave the order not to allow a photograph with the KLA logo to be sent to the festival. ***Pristina Insight*** reported on Wednesday that Kosovo President Hashim Thaci expressed his concern about the incident on Facebook. “This behavior by Serbian authorities goes against the spirit of cooperation that we are building in the region, and it goes against the efforts to create a European rapport between the countries of the region,” he said. Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj also wrote on social media, accusing Serbia of sabotaging the normalization process. “By stopping Kosovo artists at the border, Serbian authorities are destroying the few possibilities of setting up normal communication with Kosovo, be it even through art, a universal language,” Haradinaj said. Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxhaj and former Minister of Dialogue Edita Tahiri also condemned the event on Twitter.

**Assembly adopts resolution to remove border checks with Albania (*media*)**

Kosovo Assembly adopted yesterday resolution for removing border checks between Kosovo and Albania. MPs also endorsed the proposal to remove Kosovo-Albania roaming charges. The resolution received 73 votes in favour, none against and no abstention. ***Telegrafi*** however quotes analyst Imer Mushkolaj as saying that Assembly resolutions are not mandatory and as a rule, Kosovo government has not been keen in implementing them in the past.

**Kosovo and FYROM expected to sign 15 agreements (*Epoka*)**

Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, told the paper that the governments of Kosovo and of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are expected to hold a joint meeting very soon. He said that 15 agreements from the fields of justice, security, healthcare and economy are expected to be signed at this meeting.

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