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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Reconciliation with Serbia only in exchange of recognition (*Zeri*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, said Kosovo would accept reconciling with Serbia but only if in return Serbia recognizes its independence. Haradinaj said reconciliation is the only thing Kosovo can offer for an agreement with Serbia. “Reconciliation is not a small thing. It means going over our pain, the missing persons, the people killed, the damages, the rapes, the destroyed and looted economy,” Haradinaj said at a gathering of his party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). Speaking about Interpol membership bid, Haradinaj said he was convinced Kosovo will join the organization this year. “Any country that prevents Kosovo from joining Interpol is preventing the fight against transnational crime,” he said. Haradinaj also spoke about Kosovo’s UN membership which, he noted, will happen very soon.

**Thaci: No alternative to dialogue (*Telegrafi*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said in an interview to Austrian Press Agency (APA), that there is agreement by both Kosovo and Serbia that there is no alternative to dialogue. “Both parties have agreed to continue the dialogue facilitated by the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, as soon as possible so as to bring it to a legally-binding outcome,” Thaci said adding that the process will be “very difficult” and “tiring” for the two sides. “Ultimately however, we will be ending a century-old conflict,” he said. He noted that the dialogue process in Kosovo is not very popular and that he cannot force people to love one another but the foundation for good neighbourly relations can be laid. Thaci also spoke about the upcoming Austrian presidency of the EU which he said he expects to “revive” developments in the Western Balkans and that Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, can play a “powerful role”.

**Assembly to discuss Thaci’s mandate on dialogue with Serbia (*RTK*)**

The Assembly of Kosovo is expected to discuss today the draft-platform for finalization of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia on normalization of the relations. Kosovo Assembly MPs are expected to decide on whether they give the trust to the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci to represent Kosovo in the discussions with Serbia which are being held in Brussels, mediated by EU, and which are expected to conclude this year with a legal binding agreement. Opposition political parties have already announced that they are against the continuance of the dialogue without an assessment report on the results reached so far and also objected Kosovo’s representation by President Thaci.

**Government platform on dialogue, a “cover-up” for compromise agreement (*Koha*)**

The Kosovo Government’s platform on dialogue with Serbia will be among the 28 points of discussion at the Kosovo Assembly session today, ***Koha Ditore*** reports on its front page. It quotes Jeta Krasniqi from the Pristina-based Kosovo Democratic Institute as saying that the Assembly should adopt a resolution giving legitimacy to the process of dialogue and guarantee transparency, inclusiveness and accountability. Political analyst Behlul Beqaj told the paper that the government platform will serve only as a formal cover-up for “the compromise agreement” which according to Beqaj, President Thaci has already agreed upon.

**EU expects parties to continue dialogue and implement agreements (*Koha*)**

The European Union continues to remain unclear in public communication about the resumption of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia and issues that parties are addressing in their public discourse, the paper’s Brussels-based correspondent reports. He further adds that the EU does not say what exactly will happen in the near future in terms of dialogue and how close the parties are to reaching a historical agreement.

**LDK will support Thaci as chief negotiator (*Indeksonline*)**

After the speculation of the media that the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) would not support Thaci as chief negotiator on the final phase of the dialogue with Serbia, a senior official of this political party told the news portal that LDK is an institutionalist party. “Despite lack of personal respect for many, due to political rivalry, which now belong to the past, LDK has always kept and cultivated institutional respect. Therefore, speculations on behalf of LDK on whether it is going to support Hashim Thaci for chief negotiator or not, are of bad intention and with political background. If not tomorrow, LDK will soon come up with an official position pro dialogue with Serbia, because there is no other way that leads toward normalization of relations. We might be requesting more frequent reporting of the chief negotiator at the Assembly of Kosovo or some change, but this process belongs to the institutions, and if not to Hashim Thaci that we elected for President and who was obliged for this role also by the platform of Haradinaj’s government, so the executive, than who else,” said the LDK senior official who preferred to remain anonymous.

**Collaku implies compromises in Kosovo-Serbia agreement (*Gazeta Express*)**

Bekim Collaku, advisor to Kosovo President Hashim Thaci, told ***Gazeta Express*** on Sunday that there will be compromises in the Kosovo – Serbia agreement, “but the parties will not disclose them until the end of the process”. Collaku said all those who believe that President Thaci is against dialogue and compromise will be disappointed. “However, the end of dialogue will be nothing more or less than mutual recognition. Dialogue and compromise are the only way to move forward in the Euro-Atlantic integration mission,” Collaku said.

**Serbia’s three-point plan on dialogue with Kosovo (*Lajmi*)**

Rasim Lajic, Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, and Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunication, said his country presented some time ago a three-point plan for the dialogue for Kosovo, from which both parties could gain. He mentioned as the first point economy, and removal of trade barriers. “We export in Kosovo goods worth of 450 million Euros. I think that this could increase further, and current barriers should be completely removed,” Lajic said. As the second point, Lajic mentioned discussions about the problem of Association of Serb-majority Municipalities, cultural heritage and Serbs’ properties. While the third point concerns Kosovo’s membership at the international organisations, except for the UN. “This is our position, let us speak about these memberships but everything should be reached with Serbia’s consensus. We will of course see what would Serbs in Kosovo benefit from this,” Lajic said.

**Veseli: Kosovo is changing, visa liberalisation this year (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo Assembly Speaker, Kadri Veseli, said at a Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) youth event that Kosovo is changing and that it will undergo a positive transformation thanks to its vibrant youth. Veseli also said that visa liberalisation will happen by the end of this year as Kosovo has met all necessary criteria. “However, this should not be seen as a possibility to leave because Kosovo needs its youth,” he underlined.

**Kurti: Situation in Kosovo Telecom, result of organised crime (*Epoka e Re*)**

Vetevendosje leader, Albin Kurti, said in a press conference yesterday that the crisis in the Kosovo Telecom is a result of organised crime and high-level corruption. He said despite allegations of criminal activity inside the Kosovo Telecom, authorities never launched any investigation. Telecommunication expert from Vetevendosje, Ismet Hamiti, pointed out that the situation in the Telecom of Kosovo is so bad that the company is not able to even cover its own expenditures despite being very profitable. “There is only one explanation for this: the profits have been stolen through different mechanisms, ranging from damaging tenders and contracts to staged losses from ‘arbitration’”, Hamiti said. ***Koha Ditore*** quotes

Hamiti as saying that the Telecom can emerge from the current grave financial crisis only if the contract for the virtual operator is suspended and if the prosecution launches investigations into the matter. “The prosecution must do everything that is needed to suspend the contract because it steals 30 percent of the revenues of the Telecom. The prosecution must investigate the contract in its entirety, and not only parts of it,” Hamiti argued. He also claimed that “the responsibility for the current state of the Telecom calls on all post-war governments, including the current government. They have continuously acted against public interest and in favor of the interests of their own groups, which in most cases are informal groups”.

**Armed Serb soldiers near Jarinje border crossing point (*Kosovapress*)**

Citing unnamed sources, the Pristina-based news agency reports that members of the Serbian Army and the Serbian Gendarmerie have been deployed this morning near the Jarinje border crossing point. According to the sources, the troops are in Rudnica and they are controlling people and vehicles travelling from Kosovo to Serbia and vice versa. Sources also said that this is the first time that armed Serbian troops are seen in the area since Kosovo’s declared its independence.

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