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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Thaci and Vucic to meet on 18 July (*Lajmi*)**

A communique issued by the Office of the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini announced that the next meeting between the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci and President of Serbia Aleksandar Vucic, will take place on 18 July. “She will review with them the progress in discussions on the comprehensive normalisation agreement so far and plan the next steps and meetings in order to ensure the work between both sides continues at intensified pace,” the statement reads.

<https://bit.ly/2m9PRSN>

**Thaci calls for unity, warns opposition it cannot block dialogue (*Koha/Klan K.*)**

President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, said in a visit to Ferizaj/Urosevac yesterday that a united position of the political spectrum with regards to the dialogue with Serbia is necessary but at the same time warned that no one will be able to block the process. “Work is needed to reach a final agreement with Serbia and it is also a prevalent view that opposition leaders need to be involved,” Thaci said adding: “It is clear no one can run the negotiating process alone but it is also more than clear that no one can block it.” During the visit, Thaci also spoke of his brief meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Turkey and said they discussed the possibility of beginning of communication between Kosovo and Russia and that they agreed that the final agreement with Serbia will also “pave way for a certain perspective for Russia to change its position towards the state of Kosovo.”

**Negotiating team set up, no opposition representatives in it (*Koha* *Ditore*)**

***Koha Ditore*** reports on the front page that a negotiating team that will not include opposition representatives is expected to represent Kosovo at the next round of talks with Serbia in a meeting set to take place in the coming days. Officials at the President of Kosovo’s Office confirmed the establishment of the team which will be led by President Hashim Thaci. Bekim Collaku, chief of staff to the president, said that the negotiating team is made of institutional leaders – the president, assembly speaker, prime minister – and leaders of political parties that are part of the ruling coalition. And while coalition partner, Social Democratic Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA), said it was not aware of the existence of a negotiating team, Behgjet Pacolli leader of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) which is also part of the government, confirmed he will be part of the team. “Everyone should recognise the fact that these talks need to be led by the president. This is not only the position of the coalition but the international community also,” said Pacolli in a written response to the paper.

**No date set for upcoming round of Pristina-Belgrade dialogue (*Zeri*)**

Despite the last round of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue for normalisation of relations taking place on 24 June, there is no date set for the next meeting in Brussels, the paper writes. President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, has been making repeated calls to all political parties to join the process but the opposition is insisting it will not do so and is disputing Thaci’s role in leading the dialogue. Thaci meanwhile said no one can run the process alone but at the same time no one will be able to block it. Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Naser Rugova, said institutional leaders should not have rushed into dialogue without first achieving a political consensus at home. However, he rejected the idea of this consensus involving President Hashim Thaci as chief negotiator. “[He] has no constitutional legitimacy because a resolution passed by the Assembly of Kosovo in 2012 authorises the prime minister to deal with all aspects of the dialogue. That resolution is still in force,” Rugova said. At the same time, Vetevendosje MP Arberie Nagavci said the entire process of dialogue has been characterized with lack of transparency and without Assembly’s endorsement. “Our position is clear. Thaci is responsible for the situation in which we are in now and he has to be held accountable for all the talks he ran through these years without and concrete result for the Republic of Kosovo,” Nagavci said.

**Statute for the Association to be submitted to Brussels (*Epoka*)**

The managing team for establishment of the Association/Community of Serb-majority Municipalities (ACSM) announced that they are working on drafting the state for ACSM in accordance with the mandate trusted to them by Brussels agreement. The managing team announced trough a press release that the statute will be submitted to Brussels, while a working report will be submitted to the government of Kosovo. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) on the other hand, requested involvement of the government on drafting of the statute for the Association. “Statute only in accordance with the Constitutional Court’s opinion, any deviation is anti-constitutional and unacceptable,” said LDK’s caucus, Avdullah Hoti.

**Fajon: EU has to be assured that Kosovo is ready for liberalization (*Kosova Sot*)**

The European Parliament rapporteur for liberalisation of visas for Kosovo, Tanja Fajon, said that the European Commission is delayed on publishing the assessment report on fulfillment of the criteria by Kosovo for removal of visas. She said she hopes for this to happen before the summer holidays. She said that once this assessment is published, the European Parliament Commission for Civic Freedoms, Justice and Internal Affairs will act immediately.”As rapporteur, I will make efforts to ensure solid support at the European Parliament. I remain completely committed and will continue with my engagement for visa liberalization for Kosovo,” Fajon said.

**Haziri: LDK’s position has evolved, elections before talks (*Telegrafi*)**

Deputy leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Lutfi Haziri, said in an interview that the position of his party has shifted, and they now want elections before dialogue with Serbia enters the final stage. “The LDK leadership considers legitimacy of the dialogue is undermined,” Haziri said. “In all roundtables organised by political parties, elections resulted as a priority and it would not be okay to overlook this,” he added.

**Tahiri: President should lead the dialogue (*Epoka*)**

Former chief negotiator in the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, Edita Tahiri, called on the political parties for consensus on the final phase of the dialogue. She told the paper that political parties should initially reach consensus on Kosovo’s red lines in this process. According to her these include mutual recognition, Ahtisaari’s Plan and Kosovo’s membership at the UN. Tahiri stressed that the Assembly should adopt a platform on these discussions and authorize the President and negotiating team to represent Kosovo in this process.

**Albanian PM Rama hopes on full recognition of Kosovo (*media)***

Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, expressed on Wednesday hope that Belgrade and Pristina will find a solution through the dialogue and according to him, this solution would be recognition of the independence of Kosovo. In a statement for Serbian media within the margins of the NATO Summit in Brussels, Rama expressed great appreciation to Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vucic for the hard work in this process and for efforts on reaching a final solution.

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