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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Government, opposition far from consensus on dialogue with Serbia (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that ruling coalition parties and the opposition are still far from reaching the required consensus for the finale of talks with Serbia in Brussels. None of the opposition parties went to Monday’s meeting called by Assembly President and Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) leader Kadri Veseli. The latter later told reporters that sitting on the same table with Belgrade is not a privilege but rather a ‘political sacrifice’. He said achieving peace is a responsibility which should be shared by all. “A part of the opposition has agreed to take part in the dialogue. I strongly believe that we will have full unity going ahead in this process,” Veseli said adding that Kosovo’s territory and integrity will be the delegation’s red lines. Opposition representatives meanwhile said such invitations are late and they insisted that the Assembly must have a leading role in dialogue with Serbia.

**Haradinaj asked EU and U.S. for a political truce with Serbia (*media*)**

Several media report that in a visit to the Kosovo’s Foreign Ministry where he met Minister Behgjet Pacolli, Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said Kosovo has requested “truce” with Serbia so that peace can precede final agreement instead of anti-Kosovo lobbying efforts. “I can assure you our foreign policy is peaceful,” Haradinaj said. Pacolli on his part stated that Kosovo should not be discouraged from lobbying for new recognitions despite thwarting activity. Pacolli also said that he knows the names of countries that Serbia is supplying with arms in efforts to lobby against Kosovo’s independence. Pacolli said he would not publish the names of the countries. “My concerns have been confirmed. We are thinking about ways to react against this wild initiative by the Serbs. We are not discouraged by it because we need to move forward and cannot allow ourselves to be influenced by these actions. I have the names of some countries but we will not disclose this information,” Pacolli added.

**Government hopes in visa liberalisation by year’s end (*Zeri*)**

The government of Kosovo said in a written response to the paper that they are working intensively together with all other relevant institutions to achieve as best results as possible in Kosovo’s foreign policy. “You know the government has announced its priorities and is working intensively. We also have concrete results which was the basis for the [European Commission] recommendation and we believe the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo will be able to travel freely by the end of the year,” the government said.

**Hoxha: Council of Ministers, major challenge for visa liberalisation (*Zeri*)**

Kosovo’s Minister of European Integration, Dhurata Hoxha, told members of the parliamentary committee on European Integration that the EU Council of Ministers is one of the main challenges Kosovo could face towards gaining visa-free travel to Europe. “All this process should end in a treaty between the EU and Kosovo. I admit we may face challenges in the Council of Ministers as some ministers are more conservative, but we are preparing an action plan along with the government, the assembly and the committee, to lobby with countries and present Kosovo’s progress,” Hoxha said.

**Osmani: Thaci is attempting to reopen Kosovo status issue (*Zeri*)**

In an interview with the paper, MP from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Vjosa Osmani accused President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci for trying to reopen the Kosovo status issue. “President Thaci has unilaterally taken on lead of the process but in Brussels he can only speak in his personal behalf not in that of Kosovo,” Osmani said adding: “Thaci, without authorisations, is signaling that he is reopening the issue of Kosovo status by violating this way the will of the people of Kosovo.” She pointed out that LDK sees early elections as the only way to bringing legitimate government.

**Bahtiri: Exchange of territories shouldn’t be part of dialogue with Serbia (*Epoka*)**

Mitrovica Mayor, Agim Bahtiri, told the paper that the discussion he had yesterday with representatives of political parties resulted in a joint declaration which states that exchange of territories and administrative borderline should not be part of the dialogue with Serbia. The declaration also says the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities should not exceed Constitution of Kosovo. Bahtiri said Kosovo delegation in talks with Serbia should get the blessing of the Kosovo Assembly as the team that so far went to Brussels is not of unity and cannot adequately represent Kosovo.

**Serwer reacts to Serb proposal for Kosovo’s division (*Bota Sot*)**

U.S. expert on the Balkans, Daniel Serwer, reacted on Monday to a proposal by the Belgrade-based Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies for Kosovo’s partition. Serwer wrote on his blog: “The CEAS report is a transparent effort to make the West more palatable to Serbian President Vucic by suggesting NATO might lead an effort to give him northern Kosovo as compensation for normalizing relations with Pristina. It fails not only as a strategic concept but also on the merits. CEAS proposes “adjustment” of what it considers the administrative boundary with Kosovo to incorporate Northern Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic into Serbia, without any exchange for Albanian populated communities in southern Serbia. This comes (and here I have to quote because the assertion makes no sense at all) …as a consequence of the opinion that neither the West itself nor the UN have managed to clearly determine the exact amount of punishment Serbia should sustain for the crimes of Milosevic’s regime in Kosovo… Only sovereigns can cede territory. Serbia would have to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with Kosovo before Pristina could negotiate any change in the border. This is something Presidents Vucic and Thaci understand. Pristina would not agree without getting the Albanian communities in southern Serbia in exchange. Any partition, with or without exchange, would put at risk the Serb communities and religious sites south of the Ibar. Those countries that have recognized Kosovo would oppose such an exchange, because of the risk to Serb communities and religious sites as well the irredentist implications for Bosnia, Albania, and Macedonia as well as Russian aggression in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine … But we don’t have to go there, because that’s where we already are. West Side Story is shameful effort to enlist NATO in a proposal that would benefit Russia, deprive NATO of cohesion, and reduce the Balkans as well as several countries beyond once again to ethnic nationalist chaos. No thanks.”

**Bulliqi: KFOR doesn’t have mandate to delineate Kosovo’s borders (*Koha*)**

The border demarcation between Kosovo and Serbia is expected to be the next condition that the European Union will present to both countries in their integration process, the paper reports on page two. Some media reported several days ago that KFOR placed the border between Kosovo and Serbia at the village of Karacevo, Kamenica municipality, despite opposition from the local residents. A spokesman for KFOR told ***Koha*** on Monday that KFOR only replaced the signs because the old ones were damaged and that they serve to KFOR and UNMIK staff as a reference that the border with Serbia is close. “KFOR doesn’t delinate borders and the replacement of signs along the administrative boundary line has nothing to do with border delineation,” the spokesman said. Kamenica Mayor, Qendron Kastrati, said the residents and the municipality were concerned about the action because it happened without any previous notice. “We have a meeting with KFOR tomorrow to discuss the matter. I believe we will be even clearer in our positions tomorrow,” he said.

**KFOR clarifies placing of signs in village of Karaceva (*Zeri*)**

KFOR has clarified that the signs it has placed in the village of Karaceva, Kamenica municipality, are only intended to serve as warning to the international staff about the proximity of the administrative boundary line with Serbia. KFOR told the paper that the signs were always at the same spot but were only recently replaced with new ones. Villagers expressed concern over KFOR move as they feared the signs were being put up to mark the boundary line with Serbia in which case they said their property, which was always in Kosovo’s part, was now becoming part of Serbia.

**President Thaci’s motorcade involved in traffic accident (*Zeri*)**

The motorcade escorting President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci was involved in a traffic accident yesterday on the Pristina-Peja highway. Kosovo Police spokesperson Bajram Krasniqi confirmed the accident where he said four vehicles were involved but underlined that no one was injured. In a statement, Thaci’s office said there were involved in a chain reaction vehicle accident but that apart from material damage, no one got injured.

**Bahtiri accused of threatening Kosovo reporter (*Telegrafi*)**

Kosovo Association of Journalists has been informed that Shkumbin Kajtazi, reporter for Gazeta Metro news website, was threatened over the phone by Mitrovica Mayor Agim Bahtiri in connection to an article he wrote where he alleged irregularities in the hiring process of a Mitrovica municipal employee. The Association called on relevant institutions to take swift measures.

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