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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Plan to exchange part of the north with part of Presevo Valley (*Koha*)**

The final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia does not rule out the exchange of territories, the paper reports on its front page. Kosovo President Hashim Thaci on several occasions has mentioned what he called painful compromises but did not elaborate further. Sources close to the developments told the paper that Kosovo will push forward the idea of discussing border changes with Serbia. Sources said one of the options is to exchange the northern-most municipality of Leposavic and Lesak with Presevo and part of Bujanovac. The eventual agreement would also include Gazivoda, the biggest artificial lake in the northern part of Kosovo. “This is the point where the parties are expected to clash, due to Serbia’s claims that it has ownership over Gazivoda,” the source added. The Kosovar side, according to the same source, will insist that an eventual agreement on exchange of territories must pave the way for Kosovo’s membership of the United Nations and other international organizations, to annul the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities and to remove the right of Kosovo Serbs to a double vote on constitutional amendments and laws of special importance. The Office of the President has refused to comment on the matter, while the Office of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj told the paper that “none of this is true”. The U.S. Embassy has said that it is important for Kosovo to find its objectives in dialogue, while the German Embassy is against the idea of exchanging territories.

**Russian MFA dismisses reports of deal with US on Kosovo (*RTK*)**

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has dismissed reports by certain Kosovo media that the US President Donald Trump and Russia’s Vladimir Putin discussed and agreed on Kosovo’s partition in their recent summit. “We are stating with all responsibility that, just like other latest media conjectures around certain special agreements reportedly reached in Helsinki, this is absolute misinformation. All matters regarding the final status of Kosovo should be resolved on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In this context, Belgrade and Pristina agreed to conduct direct dialogue with the mediation of the European Union. Russia consistently supports this negotiating process, insists that all agreements reached during this process be fulfilled, and it will never try and discuss this subject behind both sides’ backs,” the statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry reads. <http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3304252>

**Vucic: No easy agreement with Kosovo (*Kosova Sot*)**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Saturday that there will be no favorable or satisfactory agreement with Kosovo for Serbia, the paper reports on page two. “The people must know this. It is better to have something from this agreement than nothing, something that will benefit the future of Serbia and its citizens … My duty is to save whatever we can from Kosovo,” Vucic said.

**Pacolli: Kosovo’s partition would imply violation of sovereignty (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Behgjet Pacolli, said in an interview to ***Voice of America*** that the eventual partition of Kosovo would imply the violation of sovereignty and that no one in Kosovo is ready to discuss such an option. “I haven’t heard any discussions on the idea of partitioning yet … It is difficult to discuss such an issue at this point. We have other topics to discuss with Serbia … Kosovo is very small. We have nothing to offer to anyone. We need to stand united in dialogue. We are asked to make another big compromise. But at this point I cannot discuss this. We haven’t discussed an eventual compromise in Kosovo either,” Pacolli was quoted as saying.

**Ramadani: Ideas to exchange territories are mindsets of the past (*media*)**

Burim Ramadani, Deputy Minister of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), took to Facebook on Sunday to say that ideas to exchange territories between Kosovo and Serbia are mindsets of the past. “Resolving conflicts through inhumane methods results in tragedy and we have seen this in different regions of the world,” Ramadani argued.

**Dedaj says Serbia and Turkey are witches of the Balkans (*media*)**

Kosovo’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Gjergj Dedaj, wrote on a Facebook post on Sunday that Turkey and Serbia are “witches of the Balkans” and that they aim a strategic return to Kosovo through their envoys.

**Maliqi: Opposition to support dialogue with Serbia (*Epoka e Re*)**

Political analyst and publicist, Shkelzen Maliqi, said in a front-page interview with the paper that Kosovo’s political landscape has until now always been mobilized through unity teams in discussing issues of importance. “Now for the first time it looks as if we’re not only split, undecided and far from consensus but also perhaps from the simple majority,” Maliqi said accusing opposition parties – Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje – of undertaking obstructive steps against the dialogue with Serbia finale. He said LDK’s involvement in the dialogue would prove the party’s institutional approach but said this could perhaps be possible if LDK is given a not inferior position in the final stage of the dialogue. Asked about the prospect of Presevo Valley representatives being involved in the dialogue with Serbia, Maliqi said the idea could be part of Kosovo’s conditioning to Serbia to reduce its ambitions with regards to competencies of the Association/Community of Serb-majority municipalities. “Belgrade could can seek autonomy for the Association if it does not provide Albanians in the Valley the same rights and status,” Maliqi said.

**Berisha rejects possibility of a battalion for the north (*Zeri/EO*)**

Minister of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), Rrustem Berisha, said that the KSF could undergo a change of its mission through a regular law and that only the change of its name requires constitutional amendments. “In both options, A and B, the mission is changed through a law. This does not mean to say however that we will respect the order and first change the name then the mission. But we have to look into the possibility of starting the mission change and then when a more suitable opportunity presents itself, proceed with changing the name of the Kosovo Security Force,” Berisha said. He further rejected reports that a special battalion for the north of Kosovo would be set up in exchange for the Serbian List’s support saying such practice would be unacceptable.

**200 disputes could be expected over boundary line with Serbia (*Zeri*)**

The paper reports on the front page that KFOR’s putting up of a sign to inform in the village of Karaceva meant to serve as information about the proximity of the boundary line with Serbia has caused concern with local residents who fear their property may end up under control of Serbian authorities. On Sunday, a group of Kosovo MPs visited the village and said around 180 residents complained about their property. The paper however notes that there could be as many as 200 disputes over the Kosovo-Serbia border demarcation process. At the same time, members of the Kosovo government for border demarcation said they have studied well the boundary line with Serbia and are up to the task.

**Fajon hopes Kosovo will get visa liberalization in May 2019 (*media*)**

Tanja Fajon, the European Parliament’s Rapporteur on visa liberalization for Kosovo, said in an interview to Deutsche Welle that she believes that by the end of her mandate in Parliament, Kosovo will get visa liberalization. She added that if visas are removed “everyone will be a winner”. “There are no more reasons for excuses or delays. At the same time, my advice to Kosovo’s politicians is to continue their efforts and dialogue with Brussels and European capitals to gain their necessary support and trust. This is the key to success. Kosovo must maintain its credibility and build strong alliances with EU member states and EU institutions

**FOL: Government has fulfilled 57% of work plan (*Epoka/Zeri*)**

The non-government organization FOL presented the figures of the Kosovo government’s performance in the first half of 2018 and concluded that of 225 projected activities, only 130 have been completed. In a statement, FOL said that the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Kosovo Security Force, and the Ministry for Communities and Returns are the only ones that fully implemented their six-month work plan. In contrast, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not carry out any of their planned activities during the reporting period.

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