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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Haradinaj: Kosovo army to be established by end of next month (*Epoka e Re*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said yesterday after the meeting of the government that Kosovo Security Force (KSF) will be transformed into an army by the end of next month as the second reading of the draft laws is planned to reach the Assembly after 20 November. Haradinaj said Kosovo government considers that the second reading should take place following the vote on Kosovo’s Interpol membership as “we want to keep our agenda focused on our Interpol bid.”

**In Germany, Speaker Veseli lobbies for visa liberalisation and Interpol (*dailies*)**

Kosovo Assembly Speaker Kadri Veseli has travelled to Germany where he is expected to meet President of Bundestag Wolfgang Schauble and other officials and will seek support for visa liberalisation process and Kosovo’s Interpol membership bid. Veseli is also planning to discuss ways of increasing bilateral cooperation in all fields, particularly with regards to the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force.

**Hahn hopes agreement with Serbia will lead EU five to recognise Kosovo (*media*)**

Several papers carry excerpts from an interview the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn had with the Spanish paper ***El Pais*** where he said he was hopeful that once a legally binding agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is reached, the five EU countries that have not recognised Kosovo will reconsider their decision. “The common position of the EU is that when we speak about the Balkans, we wither export stability or import instability. Experience has shown us that sustainable peace and stability in the Balkans can only be achieved through European perspective,” Hahn said. He added that a legally binding agreement between Kosovo and Serbia is necessary and even crucial for the region. Speaking about Spain’s position on Kosovo, Hahn said the country has contributed to the stability of the region. “We have strategic agreements with Kosovo. We need to let Kosovo and Serbia reach agreement and if this is achieved, we will see what the next steps are,” Hahn said.

**Vucic: I hear some insanity about Presevo and Bujanovac (*RTK*)**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic told ***Radio Free Europe*** on Tuesday that he considers that it is necessary to have borders between Albanians and Serbs. “The term boundary definition means that we have borders between Albanians and Serbs, and today we do not know where they are. My question is where are those borders, where do we say or where the Albanians say? Nobody in the world knows exactly where these borders are,” Vucic said. He made these comments while talking about the details of the policy towards Kosovo issue at the China and partners “16+1” meeting that is being held in Belgrade. He confirmed to RFE that he will meet Kosovo President Hashim Thaci in Paris, where the discussions for Kosovo issue will continue. “Everything can be tabled; therefore I am remaining silent. When I hear insanity about, I do not know, Medvedja, Bujanovc and whatever, I remain silent. Let them say everything that they think, and we will see if we can reach an agreement or not. I clearly doubt, I see that nothing is coming out of this matter, Albanians, instead of reducing expectations of their population, they increase them. Completely the opposite from of my acting in Belgrade and Serbia,” Vucic said.

**Haradinaj asks Bahtiri to refrain from comments on Mitrovica bridge (*media*)**

Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj said on Tuesday that the River Iber bridge in Mitrovica should be opened forever and not for a single day. He called on Mitrovica South Mayor Agim Bahtiri to refrain from making statements that the bridge will open soon and that singers from the U.S. will be performing there. Haradinaj told reporters in Pristina that the bridge should open in both sides instead of having a situation where “while there is some concert and celebration in the south, the north sets barricades”.

**Mitrovica bridge, topic of Bahtiri-Tanin meeting (*Epoka e Re*)**

Mitrovica Mayor Agim Bahtiri met yesterday UNMIK chief Zahir Tanin and said that the Serbian side is preventing reopening of the main bridge despite interest of all communities to see this come about as soon as possible. “This is unacceptable,” Bahtiri is quoted as saying in the meeting. He told UNMIK representatives that the international community should not tolerate such actions coming from the leadership of Mitrovica North municipality and that the reopening of the bridge should not be linked to the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. Bahtiri said further that he would like to see the inauguration of the bridge is done in cooperation with Mitrovica North Mayor Goran Rakic but if the latter continues with his ‘rejecting’ approach, “Republic of Kosovo institutions will have to do their job in opening the bridge.” UNMIK chief Tanin on his part is reported to have said that the international community wants to see full normalisation of relations between the two parties and that agreements reached so far in the process need to be implemented by all sides.

**Kosovo MFA rebuts reports of Lesotho revoking recognition (*media*)**

Kosovo institutions have rebutted the statement of the Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic that the Kingdom of Lesotho had revoked its position on Kosovo’s status which he said can be interpreted as revocation of recognition. In a statement to the press, Kosovo’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Serbia of spreading fake news and propaganda against Kosovo. It said that Serbia’s statements alleging recognition revocation by certain countries have all resulted in being untrue and it is final time for leaders in Serbia to realise that Kosovo successes can neither be stopped nor kept hidden.

**Haziri: I will run for party leader (*Tribuna Channel, Epoka*)**

Lutfi Haziri, deputy leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)spoke about the possibility of a coalition between his political party and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) as well as about his candidature for the leader of the party. “I am saying it with complete conviction that we would never govern with PDK. PDK leadership has ruined bridges of cooperation with us, they chose cooperation with someone else and it is their right,” Haziri said. “There are no announcements of party candidacies. No other candidate has asked for my support for the leader of the party, there will be time to talk about this issue of my candidacy. I believe I will run, I do not deny it," said Haziri

**PM Haradinaj commends sexual violence survivor for coming forward (*media*)**

Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj has commended Kosovo woman, Vasfije Krasniqi, for coming forward and speaking about her experience as a survivor of sexual violence in conflict in an interview with public broadcaster ***RTK***. Haradinaj said sexual violence in conflict is “one of the biggest wounds of our people” and said Krasniqi’s courage should serve as guiding force for many other survivors. “Together, by encouraging victims and their families, we will remove the stigma that has weighed on them for so many years,” Haradinaj wrote in a Facebook post.

**IMF warns of possible fiscal crisis (*RFE/Koha*)**

In an interview with ***Radio Free Europe***, head of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Office in Kosovo, Ruud Vermeulen, expressed concern that the Kosovo budget cannot cope with the increase of expenditures in the field of new social schemes. “Last year, Kosovo spent around €383 million on social schemes, 30 percent more than in 2015. Two-thirds of this increase is a result of the pension scheme for war veterans,” Vermeulen said. “If we look ahead, Kosovo’s budget cannot cope with such a quick increase of expenditures for social schemes, not to mention other pension schemes under review. If those are also to be implemented, expenditures would increase to an unsustainable scale,” Vermeulen warned. He noted that ‘generous’ pension schemes could risk leaving many Kosovars out of the job market and discourage scheme beneficiaries from seeking employment. “This harms the competition and Kosovo’s economic growth,” said the IMF official.

**EU disappointed with decision on import of old vehicles (*Koha*)**

The European Union Office in Kosovo said on Tuesday it was disappointed with the decision of the Kosovo Assembly Committee for Economic Development to increase the maximal age of imported second hand cars to 15 years, the paper reports in one of its front-page stories. “Such a move would directly affect the air pollution in Kosovo and is clearly against EU targets. Committee decision is against the Law on Air Protection from Pollution and contradictory to Assembly Resolution on Air Pollution, adopted in February this year as one of the highest priority at national level at the time,” the EU Office said in a statement. The German Ambassador to Kosovo, Christian Heldt, too opposed the committee’s decision. “I join the disappointment. Kosovo would do better with a modern fleet, even going for hybrid or electric fleets,” Heldt wrote in a Twitter post.

**Prime Minister’s Office keeps secret boycott of reception in New York (*Koha*)**

Citing unnamed sources, the paper reports on its front page that the Kosovo budget lost $20,000 after a failed reception initiated by an advisor to Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj in New York after the United Nations General Assembly. According to the sources, Erold Belegu, Haradinaj’s advisor, booked a room at the Hilton hotel to organize a reception for the heads of world delegations that were attending the General Assembly. The event would cost $50,000, but as the delegations did not confirm their participation, the event was cancelled, and the hotel still had to paid $20,000. Neither Haradinaj’s advisor, nor the Office of the Prime Minister or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided information about the event.

**Kosovo government creates committee to treat violent extremism (Epoka)**

The Kosovo Government established on Tuesday an inter-institutional committee which aims help in combating violent extremism. “The Office of the Prime Minister will offer administrative support to the Committee, which will analyze, recommend and treat all issues related to violent extremism in Kosovo,” informs the government.

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