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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Assembly President Veseli in Washington today (RTK)**

Kosovo’s Assembly President Kadri Veseli will be visiting Washington today, to meet with senior U.S. officials. He is expected to meet officials at the White House, then Pentagon and U.S. Congress. Veseli started his visit in Iowa, where he met with leaders of the National Guard, where he gained support on creation of Kosovo’s army. Veseli then visited New York, where he met with representatives of the Albanian community.

**Mustafa: Specialist chambers to also try economic crimes (*media*)**

In his first public statement since being called by the Specialist Chambers, former KLA commander Rrustem Mustafa-Remi said he considers that the chapter of the past needs to be closed but underlined that he was certain KLA committed no war crimes and that the propaganda against KLA will not be successful. He also said he expects the Specialist Chambers to broaden their scope of activity and also prosecute economic crimes. “I think there was an ‘academic’ and social coordination defunctionalize all those institutions created with a lot of hard work,” Remi said.

**U.S. Ambassador says corrupt officials should be in jail (*Epoka*)**

The U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Philip Kosnett, has requested from Kosovo citizens to undertake concrete actions on fighting corrupt politicians. In a video published on Facebook, Kosnett said commitment of Kosovo citizens against corruption is the base of achieving the aimed Western integration. “I arrived recently to serve as Ambassador and I want you to know that the government of the United States is committed to Kosovo’s success. I believe the commitment of the government and people of Kosovo to combatting corruption at every level is the foundation for prosperity and Western integration you seek. Having good laws and transparent and more transparent processes is important but it is not enough to have systems on paper if they are not implemented honestly, fully and consistently. Kosovo citizens must see that the law applies equally to all and is used to punish corrupt behaviour, especially when committed by government officials and their closest associates. I urge you to look beyond personal interests and demand justice and accountability citizens desire and deserve,” Kosnett said.

**O’Connell: Kosovo has problems with corrupt politicians (Epoka)**

Ruairi O’Connell, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kosovo, said Kosovo has problems with corrupt politicians and officials who work more for their personal interests than that of the society. He said in a video published on the official page of the Embassy in Facebook that his state is cooperating with the justice system and civil society in order to monitor as best as possible the work of the courts in order to unroot corruption. “For this reason, we at the British Embassy in Kosovo are working to support courageous people, as is the case of Murat Mehmeti, an official at the Tax Administration, who works on fighting corruption,” O’Connell said.

**Kurti: Citizens of Kosovo isolated by corrupt politicians (*Zeri*)**

On the International Anti-Corruption Day, Vetevendosje leader Albin Kurti held a press conference where he said that the citizens of Kosovo have remained isolated without the possibility of free travel to Europe because of their corrupt politicians. “There is only one solution, calling elections in the country. 2018 was a failed year of Kosovo towards European Union,” he said. He recalled that visa liberalisation was promised to Kosovo by its leaders as far back as ten years ago and that the EU’s response was clear: “There can be no visa liberalisation with this criminalized and corrupt government”. Kurti is quoted as saying in ***Koha Ditore*** that Vetevendosje MPs will vote in favor of the formation of the Kosovo Army whenever the Assembly votes on the issue.

**EU Council to discuss tax and KSF mandate (*Epoka e Re*)**

Council of EU foreign ministers will meet today in Brussels and discuss a range of issues pertaining to the Western Balkans but is also expected to call on Kosovo to retract its 100-percent import tax on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU Council will also discuss the Kosovo’s initiative to transform the Kosovo Security Force into army as well as the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

**Disagreements over President’s role block initiatives for consensus (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that another attempt to reach consensus between the ruling parties and one part of the opposition on dialogue with Serbia is on the verge of failure. Parties also have disagreements about the President’s role in the process of talks with Belgrade. Two documents proposed by the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo (PSD) on dialogue with Serbia will not be included in the Assembly’s agenda as the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) has expressed skepticism over the initiative for the time being. The two documents will be discussed only after the Assembly votes on the package of laws for the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo Army, which is expected to happen on December 14. Meanwhile, observers of the Assembly’s work argue that without setting up a working group on the resolution, a timeline on harmonizing the text of the document and without securing the required votes in the Assembly – initiatives aimed at reaching consensus will not be successful. On the same issue, ***Bota Sot*** reports that according to the PDK, the resolution will be adopted soon, but that this party does not want the role of President Thaci in the process to be affected.

**Gorani: PSD draft resolution on dialogue cannot be negotiated (*Epoka*)**

In an interview with the paper, MP from the Social Democratic Party (PSD) Dukagjin Gorani said that the party’s draft resolution on dialogue with Serbia is not up for negotiation and will either be approved in its entirety or be altogether rejected. He said the draft resolution sets out Kosovo’s mandate, representation, decision-making and accountability in regard to the dialogue with Serbia and while the role of the president is to represent Kosovo this does not mean to say he can “lead such important talks.” “Kosovo does not have a presidential system therefore we should waste no time discussing something as pointless as this. The president and other constitutional institutions are important in formal representation but not negotiations,” Gorani said adding that the Assembly of Kosovo needs to mandate a state delegation that leads talks under its oversight.

**Palokaj: Kosovo should not wait for NATO’s consent to form army (*Koha*)**

The paper’s Brussels-based correspondent, Augustin Palokaj, argues in an opinion piece that Kosovo should not wait for NATO’s consent to form its armed forces. “NATO has liberated Kosovo and it has secured peace. But NATO does not treat Kosovo as a state and in formal political relations it even has a ridiculous position vis-à-vis Kosovo in order to please the four non-recognizing member states. As all decisions in NATO are made through consensus, Kosovo will never have support for any step that strengthens its statehood, including the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an Army. But Kosovo must take this step with the consent and support of allies that have recognized its statehood,” Palokaj writes.

**Kosovo businesses insist on CEFTA being renegotiated (*Epoka*)**

Kosovo business community has called on the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) be renegotiated and Kosovo’s legal position within the agreement be redefined, the paper reports. Kosovo businesses say Kosovo needs to be represented not through UNMIK but on its own right and furthermore the entire free trade agreement continues to be unfavourable for Kosovo producers. Skender Krasniqi Officials from the Kosovo Business Chamber said they believe Kosovo should pull out of CEFTA completely if it continues to be represented by UNMIK noting that Kosovo’s current position in the agreement is unconstitutional. At the same time, Berat Rukiqi, head of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce said Kosovo needs to be ‘repositioned’. “It is now too late to pull out of CEFTA as it is part of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement,” Rukiqi said and said Kosovo should instead insist on a political decision which would enable it to be recognised by Serbia as a full-fledged member of CEFTA.

**Kosovo Customs: “Unconstitutionally-labelled” products not allowed in (*Klan*)**

Kosovo Customs has issued a statement denying reports they have allowed into Kosovo products bearing what is considered unconstitutional labelling. The Kosovo Customs called such reports “untrue” and added that as of 21 November there has been no import of products expect for ‘minimal’ import of raw material which is not packaged for retail sale.

**Kosovo Serb politician interviewed by Serbian Intelligence Agency (*media*)**

Most online media report that Slobodan Petrovic, member of the Kosovo Assembly and leader of the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), was stopped by Serbian Police at the Merdare crossing point on Saturday as he was travelling to Serbia and was then interviewed for several hours by members of the Serbian Intelligence Agency. Petrovic told ***Zeri*** that this has caused fear and uncertainty among Kosovo Serbs and that this further damages relations between Kosovo and Serbia. “This does not do service to good neighborly relations and coexistence, on the contrary, it creates even more fear and insecurity,” Petrovic was quoted as saying.

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