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**Kosovo** Media Highlights

**Negotiating team heads, Ahmeti and Limaj, meet President Thaci (*media*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci received on Monday chairpersons of the Kosovo negotiating team for dialogue with Serbia, Shpend Ahmeti and Fatmir Limaj, and discussed the final stage of dialogue for normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Thaci also discussed the need for coordination during the negotiation process. “This momentum should be utilised and it is necessary to further strengthen the political unity and to speak with one voice about Kosovo. This was also President Trump’s clear demand to Kosovo’s leadership, which we must respect because it is in full compliance with our state interest,” Thaci is quoted in a statement issued by his office after the meeting.

**Thaci asks Constitutional Court to interpret international agreements (*Zeri*)**

President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci has sent a request to the Constitutional Court asking it to provide additional clarifications on Article 18 of the Constitution of Kosovo regarding ratification of international agreements. Thaci inquired about whether international agreements signed by the president of Kosovo are considered as ratified or they also require Assembly’s endorsement. The paper writes that Thaci’s request is part of his efforts to bypass the Assembly in case of an agreement with Serbia.

**Assembly to hold an extraordinary session on the dialogue (*Lajmi*)**

The Assembly of Kosovo will hold today at 10:00 hours an extraordinary session. Kosovo Assembly MPs from the Vetevendosje Movement and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), collected signatures for the extraordinary sessions in order to discuss the draft agreement on the dialogue with Serbia, proposed by the government of Kosovo.

**No unity among political parties on dialogue, despite efforts (*Epoka*)**

The joint meeting of Kosovo’s institutional leaders, representatives of the political parties and leaders of the negotiating team to discuss the issues of the dialogue with Serbia, will be held today (Wednesday) at 10:00 hours. However, despite the invitation, representatives of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje Movement will not participate at the round-table called by the President of the Assembly, Kadri Veseli.

**Mustafa says Kosovo needs unity for dialogue with Serbia (*Zeri*)**

Leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) Isa Mustafa said political parties need to act in unison to protect Kosovo. In a Facebook post, Mustafa said that at crucial times for Kosovo it makes little difference who is in power and who in opposition but that there can be no resolution of issues of national interest without both wings working together. In a subsequent post, Mustafa said his above statement does not mean to say LDK will become part of the negotiating team and that it will continue to protect interests of Kosovo as opposition.

**LDK’s Selmanaj: We won’t be part of political games (*media*)**

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) MP, Driton Selmanaj, said on Tuesday that his party will not attend the meeting called today by Assembly President Kadri Veseli on dialogue with Serbia, “because we won’t agree to be part of political games”. Selmanaj also said they called for an extraordinary session of the Assembly, “because the heads of political parties have received a document from the Prime Minister which is called a draft document for an eventual final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. This was not a document for the MPs but for heads of political parties and as far as we know for ambassadors accredited in Kosovo”. Selmanaj further said that the draft document is concerning, “because if you read it carefully it touches on some issues that not only impact the Constitution of Kosovo but they also go beyond the Ahtisaari Package”.

**Haradinaj calls Brnabic’s request to Rama, shameful (*media*)**

The Prime Minister of Kosovo Ramush Haradinaj said on Tuesday that the imposed tax for Serbian goods is the right of Kosovo and added that in this manner “we are defending the national interest. He further called the request of Serbia’s Prime Minister Anan Brnabic addressed to the Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, to withdraw recognition of the independence of Kosovo, shameful. “You see how the Prime Minister of Serbia is continuing with her letters addressed to different governments. She was not ashamed to send a letter to Edi Rama as well, requesting withdrawal of recognition. While Serbia has such an approach, then our action can be clearly understood,” Haradinaj said.

**Brnabic: No dialogue prior to removal of tax by Pristina (*RTK*)**

The Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabic, said Belgrade is ready to continue with the dialogue with Pristina, when the imposed tax on Serbian goods is removed. According to her, this tax has drawn the entire region fifty steps back. “We need peace and stability. The precondition for economic progress is regional peace and stability,” Brnabic told RTS. Speaking about the statement of the KFOR Spokesperson Vincennes Gras that Kosovo Police Special Units do not need permission to go to the north, Brnabic said she agrees with the statement of Serbia’s Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic that KFOR should submit a manual about “what they can or cannot do.”

**Dialogue with Serbia: LDK, VV write to EU (*RTK*)**

The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Vetevendosje submitted to the EU Office in Kosovo a joint letter relating to the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. The letter, addressed to the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn, notes that the two opposition parties remain committed to resolving all issues between Kosovo and Serbia through dialogue and they are very much interested in the dialogue heading towards full normalisation of relations which implies mutual recognition. The two parties said they are an important factor and that they represent majority of the electorate and as a result it cannot be considered that the newly-formed negotiating team is broad-based or a “unity” team.

**Serbian President plans to step up aid for Kosovo Serbs (*media*)**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said on Tuesday that “the situation of Serbs in Kosovo is deteriorating as Pristina most probably will not remove the tax on Serbian goods by the wend of the year”. Vucic said Serbia will step up aid for Kosovo Serbs next year. Commenting on the letter that U.S. President Donald Trump sent to him, Vucic said this was the first time that the U.S. President mentioned a compromise solution between Kosovo and Serbia. ***Klan Kosova*** quotes Vucic as saying that the Kosovo Security Force and Kosovo Police special units cannot go the northern part of Kosovo unless they have permission from KFOR and the Kosovo Serb community. “This is the truth. Anyone who says differently, is the worst liar,” he said.

**Serbian List opposes Bahtiri’s initiative for Mitrovica unification (*Zeri*)**

The Serbian List has opposed Mitrovica Mayor Agim Bahtiri’s petition for unification of his municipality with that of Mitrovica North. In a statement, Serbian List accused Bahtiri of creating ethnic divisions and “feeding hatred towards Serbs.” Serbs in Mitrovica North, said the Serbian List, will protect what is theirs with all force “because the determination of our people is unbreakable and the support of our state of Serbia and President Vucic is undisputable.”

**PDK leaders dine in Mitrovica, Agim Bahtiri takes part (*media*)**

Several news websites report that leaders of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) met for dinner on Tuesday in Mitrovica, and that Mitrovica South Mayor Agim Bahtiri, earlier a fierce critic of the PDK, was also present at the dinner.

**Government aims to reduce unemployment rate through games of chance (*Koha*)**

The paper reports on its front page that the Kosovo government is planning to reduce the unemployment rate through games of chance. The Haradinaj-led government, in a draft document adopted last week, mentioned many barriers that this industry is faced with and has pledged to remove all of them, including the removal of excise and the limitation for games of chance to operate near schools. The government foresees that this will not only help this industry, but also improve the well-being of the people, it will bring about economic development and open many new jobs. The paper also notes that “Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, his brother Daut, and Haki Shatri, former Minister of Finance and currently economy advisor to PM Haradinaj, were earlier rumored to be linked to the bosses of the biggest businesses of games of chance”.

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